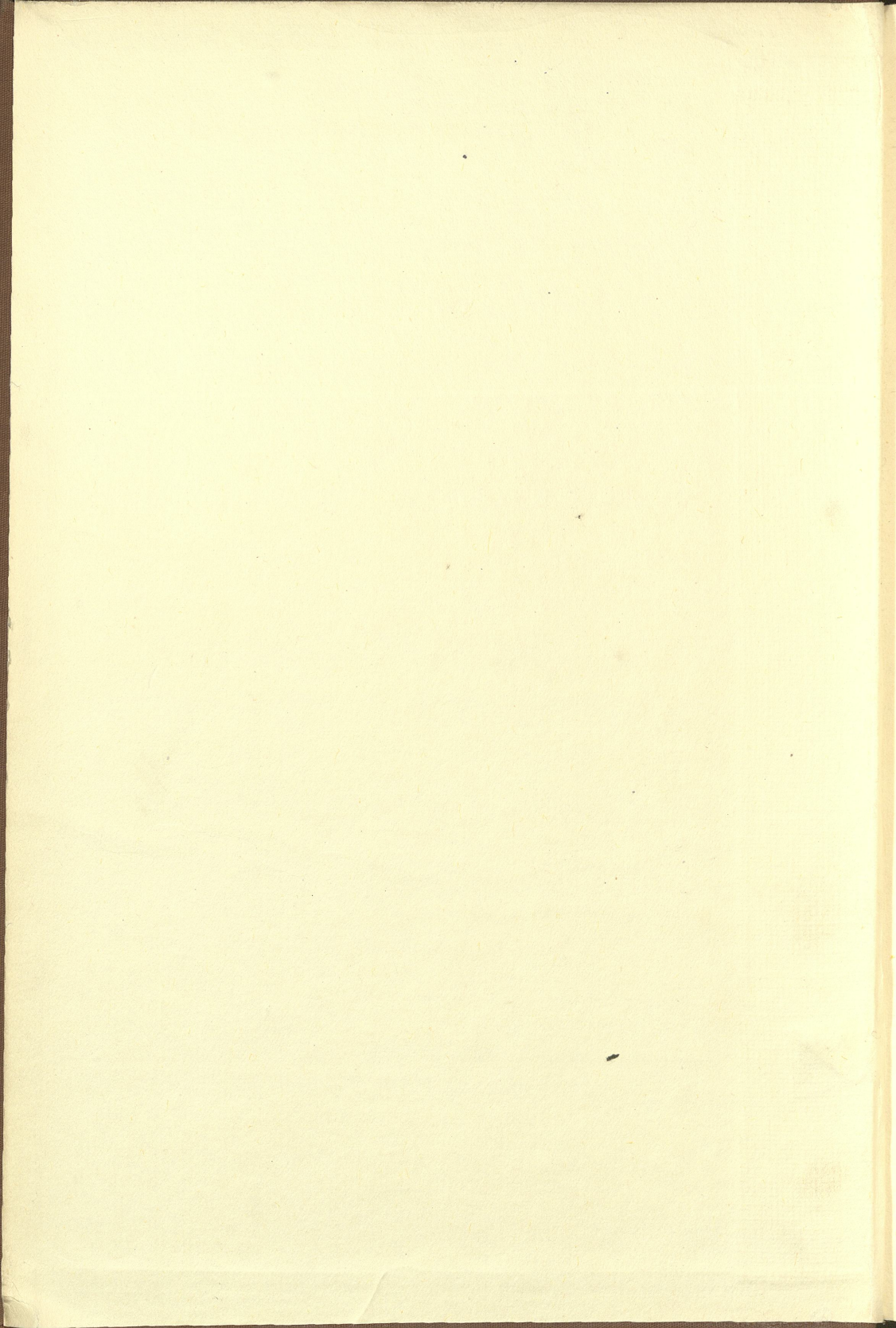
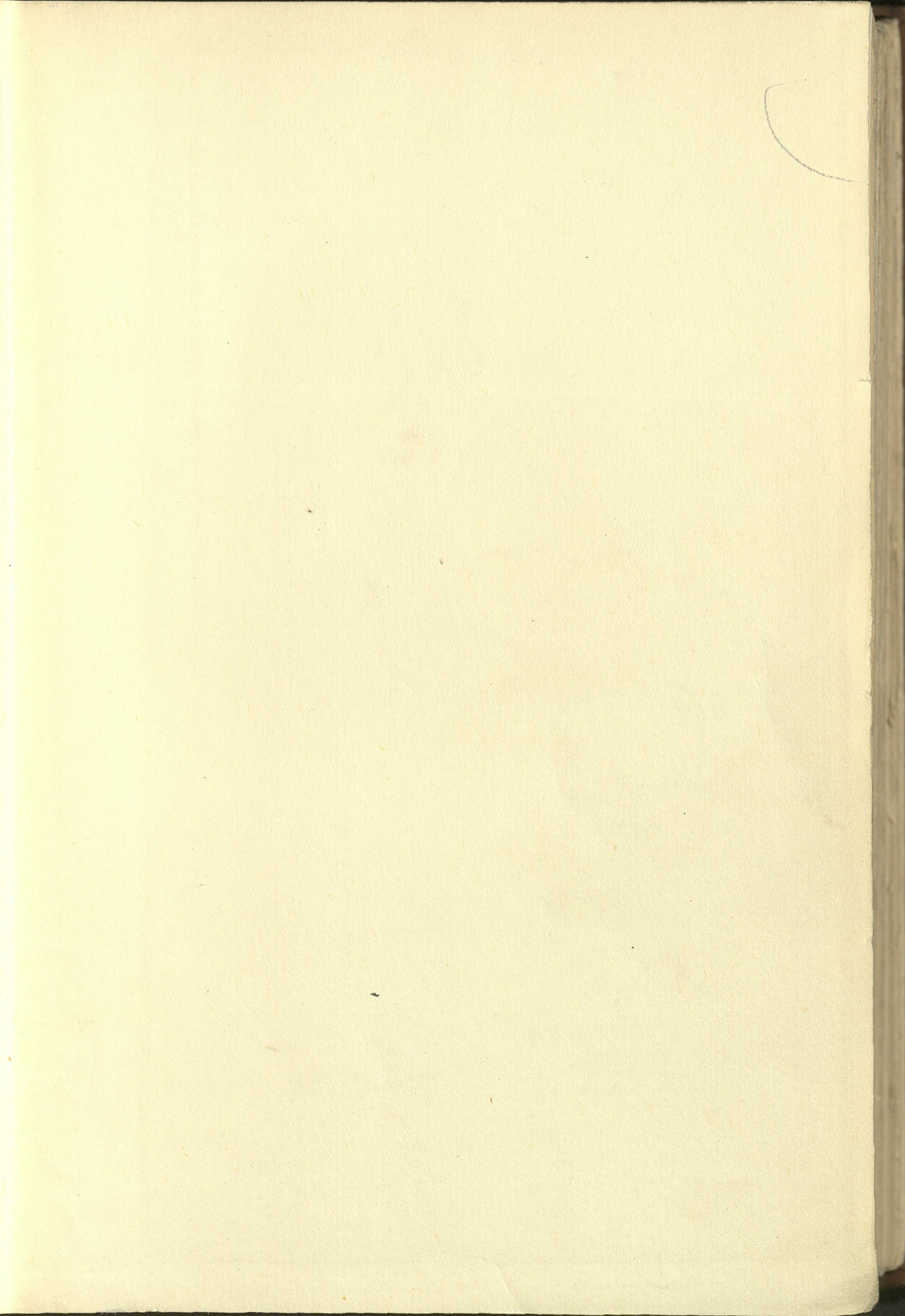


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SHAKESPEARE'S WILD FLOWERS



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"A Garden of Herbs."

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"Fairy Lovers Days."

"Bird Lovers Days."





STRAWBERRY AND EMPEROR MOTH

by

JACQUES le MOYNE de MORGUES

SHAKESPEARE'S WILD FLOWERS

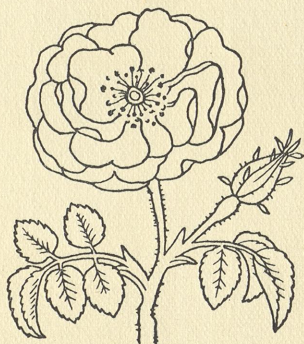
FAIRY LORE, GARDENS, HERBS,
GATHERERS OF SIMPLES
AND BEE LORE

By

ELEANOUR
SINCLAIR ROHDE

Author of

"The Scented Garden," "Gardens of Delight,"
"The Story of the Garden."



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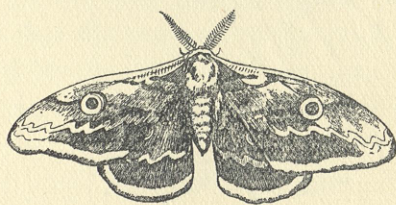
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN, MCMXXXV

31. viii. 1938.
L. 2395.

TO
MAUD MESSEL
WITH LOVE
FROM
E. S. R.

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AFTER THE WATER COLOURS BY
JACQUES LE MOYNE DE MORGUES

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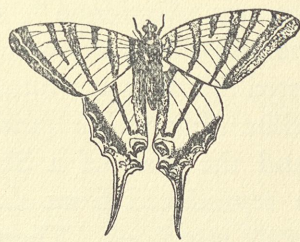


NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The coloured illustrations in this book are reproduced from the series of water colour drawings attributed to Jacques le Moyne de Morgues in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Jacques le Moyne or Jacques Morgues, who had been sent by Chastillon, Admiral of France, with Landonnière's expedition to Florida in 1564, was a Protestant. He escaped the massacre of S. Bartholomew and took refuge in this country. His book *La Clef des Champs* was dedicated to Lady Mary Sidney, mother of Sir Philip Sidney, and the fact that he signed the dedication "vostre tres affectionné", shows that he was on terms of the friendliest intimacy with the Sidney family. It has been suggested that he was a tutor in that household. The black and white illustrations (with the exception of the Bee House and the Plan of a Shakespeare Garden) in this book are reproduced from *La Clef des Champs* (1586), an excessively rare book. There are two imperfect copies in the British Museum and one copy was auctioned at Messrs. Sotheby's and bought by Messrs. Quaritch in 1904. These are the only known copies. Le Moyne states in the preface that the purpose of the book was to provide designs for goldsmiths, embroiderers, etc.

The Tailpieces are taken from *Theatrum Floræ*, 1628.





PREFACE

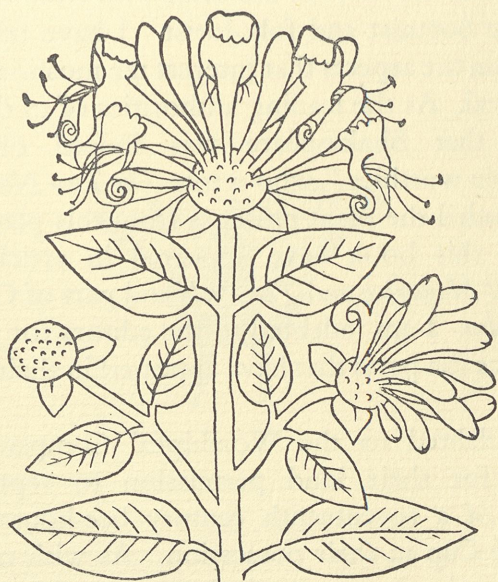
In two chapters of this book—"Wild Flowers and Native Trees" and "Garden Flowers and Fruits", I have treated of subjects on which there are already two works—Canon Ellacombe's *Plant Lore of Shakespeare* and Mr. F. G. Savage's *The Flora and Folk-lore of Shakespeare*. In both of these books the subjects are dealt with from the point of view of the botanist and folk-lorist. I have tried to treat of them from the aspects that interest me most—the poetical and historical. As the leading authorities of to-day support the view that Shakespeare was indeed one of the "memorable worthies" who wrote *The Two Noble Kinsmen* I have included the plant passages from this play.

Parts of this book have appeared in article form in *The Cornhill Magazine* and *The Field* and part of Chapter VII in *My Garden*. I am indebted to the editors for permission to reproduce the parts that have appeared in their respective journals.

I am indebted to the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers for their kind permission to reproduce the engraving of a seventeenth century bee-house from the Normansell Cup in their possession. As with most of my previous books I am particularly grateful to Colonel Messel for reading this in proof.

ELEANOUR SINCLAIR ROHDE

CRANHAM LODGE,
REIGATE, SURREY
October, 1935



CHAPTER I

WILD FLOWERS AND NATIVE TREES

Shakespeare looked at wild flowers not as a botanist, but as a countryman looks at them. Every word he wrote about the familiar denizens of the meadows, fields, and hedgerows of Warwickshire, the glades of the Forest of Arden, and the banks of the Avon, testifies to his keen powers of observation and his delight in the beauty and fragrance of wild flowers. Milton's references to flowers savour of the study, but there is fresh air and the beauty of living flowers in all that Shakespeare wrote of them. Unlike the botanist, he treats of them, not as isolated objects, but with their natural background. Moreover, Shakespeare knew the countryside, not as town-bred idealists see it, but as the countryman knows it—in its grimmest as in its fairest aspects. In one of the Sonnets, Shakespeare says of himself, "Flowers I noted,"¹ and all that he wrote about flowers and trees testifies to the truth of this statement. Above all, he seems to have loved the spring flowers, "the sweet o' the year," heralding the joyous time—

"When proud pied April dress'd in all his trim
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything."²

Who has described so perfectly as Shakespeare the English primrose with its rare combination of pale, ethereal sweetness, and merry radiance? Ben Jonson called

¹ Sonnet XCIX.

² Sonnet XCVIII.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

primroses "the glory of the spring" and indeed "the first ambassadors thereof" as they are described in Parkinson's *Paradisus*, shine in the copses and by the hedgerows with a luminous beauty lacking in flowers far more brilliant of hue. The woodlands are lit by their pale flames as they are lit by no other flower. As Giles Fletcher wrote, two centuries ago—

"the woods' late wintry head
Wide flaming Primroses set all on fier."

Spenser, in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, wrote of "primroses Greene" and he is more accurate than Wordsworth, who calls them yellow.¹ For seen in the mass there is a pale, yet dominant, greenish tone in the luminous colour of the flowers, and indisputably the ethereal loveliness of this colour, which is in perfect harmony with the exquisite, fresh, pure scent of the flowers, cannot be described as yellow.

The colour of the flower is impossible to describe, save by "primrose" or by the word used by both Shakespeare and Milton—pale. Shakespeare also describes them as "faint". Arviragus, bearing Imogen's body, when she was supposed to be dead, says:—

"I'll sweeten thy sad grave; thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose."²

Queen Margaret in *King Henry the Sixth*, Part ii, Act iii, Scene 2, says:—

¹ When part of this chapter appeared in article form in the *Cornhill Magazine*, a correspondent, apparently a keen admirer of Wordsworth, wrote to me that in his opinion, Wordsworth, in the well-known lines about a "primrose by the river's brim" indicates Peter Bell's limitations by the fact that to him a yellow primrose was but a *yellow* primrose. This idea, which differs somewhat from the apparently obvious meaning, had not occurred to me and I think it is interesting.

² *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

“ I would be blind with weeping, sick with groans,
Look pale as primrose, with blood-drinking sighs,
And all to have the noble duke alive.”

And to quote *Hermia* :—

“ In the wood where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie.” ¹

Perdita’s reference to—

“ pale primroses
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bold *Phœbus* in his strength.” ²

has never yet been satisfactorily explained. Yet the same traditional belief in the love of the sun for certain flowers apparently underlies *Milton*’s phrase “ the rathe Primrose that forsaken dies ”, and *Drayton*, in his *Eclogue*, speaks of the pansy and marigold as “ *Phœbus*’ paramours ”. *Shakespeare* twice uses the simile of the primrose path. *Ophelia* exhorts *Laertes* not to emulate ungracious pastors :—

“ Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whilst like a puff’d and reckless libertine
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads.” ³

Again, the Porter in *Macbeth* exclaims : “ I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to everlasting fire.” ⁴

Violets are mentioned by *Shakespeare* eighteen times, and to one of his most charming women he gave the name of the flower beloved through the centuries by all the great

¹ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Act i, Scene 1.

² *The Winter’s Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 3.

⁴ *Macbeth*. Act i, Scene 3.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

poets. He invariably refers to the sweet violet—*Viola odorata*—

“ Violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eye,
Or Cytherea’s breath.” ¹

How accurately he describes the fleeting nature of their exquisite scent :—

“ Sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute,
No more.” ²

We are all familiar with this curious characteristic of the scent of violets. The keen, sweet fragrance, suggestive of a mossy bank, is indeed “ the perfume and suppliance of a minute ”, for after that the scent apparently vanishes, and we can smell it no more. In childhood we imagined we had “ smelt the smell out of the violets ”, but the flowers were, of course, still full of fragrance. Ionone is the dominant substance in their scent, and ionone has a soporific effect on the sense of smell. It is our sense of smell that is exhausted, not the scent of the violets. The old herbalists may have had no knowledge of the constituents of violet scent, but they knew its soporific effect, and to these flowers they ascribed the “ gift of sleep ”. To quote Anthony Askham :—

“ For them that may not sleep for sickness see the violets in water and at even let him soke well hys feete in the water to the ancles ; when he goeth to bed bind of this herb to his temples, and he shall sleepe well by the grace of God.”

Garden varieties of the sweet-scented violet are more richly scented, but they lack the exquisitely pure, keen,

¹ *The Winter’s Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 3.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

scent of the wild flower. Sweetest of all violet scents is that of the white violet, a fact pointed out three centuries ago, by that great connoisseur of scents—Lord Bacon. Was it to white violets that Laertes referred when he bade them lay his sister in the earth :—

“ Lay her in the earth
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring ! ” ¹

Shakespeare, in one phrase in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, speaks of the “ nodding violet ”,—“ where oxlips and the nodding violet grows.” ² The violet does not nod its head in the modern sense of the word. “ Nodding ” here signifies the bending downwards of the flower, which is a characteristic of the growth of this plant. In another passage Shakespeare indeed, emphasizes the fact that the flower does not “ nod ” but “ wags ” its head in a strong wind :—

“ They are as gentle
As zephyrs blowing below the Violet
Not wagging his sweet head.” ³

Sprengel was the first great botanist to note that the violet holds its flower upside down, and after careful study came to the conclusion that the reason for this position, which adds so much to the beauty of the flower, was to prevent rain damaging the pollen. Shakespeare may not have appreciated the reason, but his phrase, “ the nodding violet,” shows he had observed the graceful, downward bend of the stalk. He described in poetic language the

¹ *Hamlet*. Act v, Scene 1.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

³ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

characteristic growth of the flower so frequently emphasized by botanists in later times.

But the loveliest passage about violets is surely that in *Twelfth Night* :—

“That strain again. It had a dying fall;
O it came o’er my ear like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bed of Violets,
Stealing and giving odour.”¹

Modern research has proved that scent in flowers is built up like a chord of music, the scent consisting of the blended perfumes of various similar substances, the characteristic perfume being contributed by the dominant substance. Shakespeare seems to have had an intuitive knowledge of the mysterious relation of scent to music, for how else could he have compared a certain strain to the scent of violets borne and enriched by a south wind? Shakespeare’s keen appreciation of the scent of violets is evident in several other passages, notably the following :—

“To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet

Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.”

King John. Act iv, Scene 2.

“Who, when he lived, his breath and beauty set
Gloss on the rose, smell to the violet.”

Venus and Adonis.

“When I behold the violet past prime
And sable curls all silvered o’er with white

Then of thy beauty do I question make
That thou among the wastes of time must go.”

Sonnet xii.

¹ *Twelfth Night.* Act i, Scene 1.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

“The forward violet thus did I chide :—
Sweet thief, whence did'st thou steal thy sweet that smells
If not from my love's breath? the purple pride
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells
In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed.”

Sonnet xcix.

In *Venus and Adonis* there is yet another reference, this time to the exquisite colouring of the violet.

“These blue-veined violets whereon we lean,
Never can blab, nor know not what we mean.”

Shakespeare twice draws his imagery from the violet. Laertes describes Hamlet as “a violet in the youth of primy nature”¹ and the Duchess in *King Richard the Second* (Act v, Scene 2), says :—

“Welcome, my son—Who are the violets now
That strew the green lap of the new-come spring?”

Pansies Shakespeare mentions three times, and in two cases he calls the flower by the old country name of Love-in-idleness. The name signifies love in vain, or to no purpose. Both Chaucer and Tyndale use the phrase “in idleness” in this sense. Hence the force of Oberon's command. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, mentions Love-in-idleness amongst the “foolish names” given to *Viola tricolor*—“Some give it foolish names, as Love-in-idleness, Call me to you, and Three faces in a hood.” Modern pansies alas! bear little resemblance to the pansies Shakespeare knew. The modern hybrids are so out of proportion to the plant that it is difficult to understand the admiration some people have for them, and one cannot believe Spenser would have applied the epithets “pretty pawnee” and

¹ *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 3.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

“pawnces trim” to them. Garden varieties are believed to have been evolved from *Viola tricolor*, one of our commonest wild plants. Few plants have so many popular names—Three faces under a hood, Herb trinity, Kiss me at the garden gate, Pink of my John, Jump up and kiss me. Apart from those mentioned by Parkinson, Shakespeare also calls the plant “Cupid’s flower”. “Cupid’s flower” is not one of the popular names and is not to be found in any other writer. Possibly he bestowed it on account of the amatory associations of the flowers. Pansies were amongst Ophelia’s flowers :—

“And there is pansies—that’s for thoughts.”¹

In both passages where the flower is termed Love-in-idleness it figures as a love charm.

Lucentio.

“But see! while idly I stood looking on
I found the effect of Love-in-idleness.”²

Again in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* :—

Oberon.

“Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell :
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wound,
And maidens call it Love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower : the herb I show’d thee once ;
The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb : and be thou here again,
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.”³

¹ *Hamlet*. Act v, Scene 5.

² *The Taming of the Shrew*. Act i, Scene 1.

³ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

Oberon released his queen from the effects of "Cupid's flower" with "Dian's bud" (wormwood)—

"Be, as thou wast wont to be :
See as thou wast wont to see ;
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.
Now, my Titania ! wake you, my sweet queen." ¹

Daffodils, our native *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*, Shakespeare mentions only four times, but in each case it is plain that to him they symbolized more than any other spring flowers the bravery, joyousness, and brightness, not only of spring, but of youth. Perdita's daffodils—

"That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty." ²

are suggestive of the swift courage of youth, and Autolycus' song is full of the same dauntless gladness :—

"When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh, the doxy over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year." ³

In Shakespeare's day daffodils were favourite flowers for chaplets, and he refers to this fact in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* :—

"I'll bring a bevy,
A hundred black-eye'd maids that love as I do,
With chaplets on their heads of daffodillies." ⁴

In the same play there is a reference to the classic story of Narcissus :—

Emilia.

"This garden has a world of pleasure in 't.
What flower is this ?"

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iv, Scene 1.

² *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *Ibid.*, Act iv, Scene 2.

⁴ *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Act iv, Scene 1.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

Woman.

"Tis called narcissus, madam."

Emilia.

"That was a fine boy, certain, but a fool
To love himself; were there not maids enough?"¹

With what rare fancy Shakespeare depicts the meadow flowers, above all cowslips:—

"The even mead that erst brought sweetly forth
The freckled cowslip, burnet and sweet clover."²

One of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* speaks of cowslips as the "pensioners tall" of the fairy queen. "Pensioners" nowadays usually denotes men of humble rank, too old to work, but Queen Elizabeth's fifty "pensioners" were chosen from amongst the noblest and tallest young men in the kingdom. They were attired in livery of a golden hue and wore their sovereign's "favours", usually jewels, such as rubies, etc. Cowslips were Titania's "pensioners tall":—

"The cowslips tall her pensioners be,
In their gold coats spots you see;
These be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours.
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear."³

Nor did Shakespeare fail to note the "crimson drops" in the eye of the cowslip:—

"On her left breast
A mole cinque spotted, like the crimson drops
I' the bottom of a cowslip—a voucher
Stronger than ever law could make."⁴

¹ *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Act ii, Scene 2.

² *King Henry the Fifth.* Act v, Scene 2.

³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.

⁴ *Cymbeline.* Act ii, Scene 2.



RED CLOVER

by

JACQUES le MOYNE de MORGUES



Wild Flowers and Native Trees

Shakespeare twice indicates the size of his fairies in connection with cowslips. The "cowslips tall" who were Titania's pensioners, gives us an idea of the size of the fairy queen, and Ariel could lie "in a cowslip's bell".¹

The closely allied oxlips Shakespeare mentions twice. Oxlips grew on the bank where Titania slept² and Perdita associated "bold oxlips"³ with the crown imperial. It is impossible to see oxlips growing without realizing how aptly the epithet "bold" describes them.

Burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*) associated by Shakespeare with cowslips and clover in the "even mead" was formerly valued as a salad herb and for its scent. Bacon advocated the planting of paths with burnet, wild thyme, and water-mints "to have the pleasure where you walk or tread". The only other reference to clover is in *Titus Andronicus*, where Shakespeare gives it the name of "honey stalks", a name used by no one else.

"With words more sweet and yet more dangerous
Than baits to fish or honey-stalks to sheep."⁴

The name is given in the *English Dialect Dictionary* as used for white clover in Warwickshire alone. Mr. Savage states that an old inhabitant of Atherstone-on-Stour informed him that he remembered the name being used for both white and red clover.

In the spring song in *Love's Labour's Lost* there is another glimpse of the meadows:—

"When Daisies pied and Violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white,

¹ *The Tempest*. Act v, Scene 1.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

³ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

⁴ *Titus Andronicus*. Act iv, Scene 4.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

And Cuckoo buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight.”¹

No botanist would describe lady-smocks (*Cardamine pratensis*) as “silver-white” for, strictly speaking, the flowers are a pale lavender, but to those of us who are country folk Shakespeare’s phrase rings true. For when their dainty flowers grow in thousands, the meadows seem agleam with them and in the spring sunlight they look as Shakespeare describes them—silvery white. Cuckoo buds are surely buttercups, for what other flower “of yellow hue” can be associated with lady-smocks to “paint the meadows with delight”? Buttercups in flower are the lords of the meadows and their burnished petals, catching and reflecting every ray of light, outshine the beauty of the other flowers. Notwithstanding their radiance they are unassuming: indeed they may almost be described as friendly, and for centuries this characteristic has endeared them to children. The sight of them inspires us with a curious sense of joyous elation; their gaiety is infectious. In one brief sentence Shakespeare depicts the character of the flowers that “do paint the meadows with delight”.

The “cuckoo flowers” wherewith Lear when mad adorned himself, with other wild flowers, may have been buttercups too. We call lady-smocks “cuckoo flowers” but that was evidently not the plant Shakespeare had in mind in this passage, for it does not commonly grow with the other flowers mentioned.

Daisies “smelless yet most quaint”,² in honour of which Chaucer wrote some of his loveliest lines, Spenser’s

¹ *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Act v, Scene 2.

² *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Act i, Scene 1.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

“daintie Daisies”, are not frequently mentioned by Shakespeare. There is the unforgettable simile in *Lucrece* :—

“Without the bed her other faire hand was
On the green coverlet, whose perfect white
Showed like an April daisy on the grass.”

Daisies were amongst the flowers offered by Ophelia and they figured in her “fantastic garlands”.¹ And Lucius commanded his men to “find out the prettiest daisied plot”² to bury Cloten.

The crowflower³ of Ophelia’s garlands was probably the Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*). Gerard calls the Ragged Robin crowflower and states that the flowers “serve for garlands and crowns and to deck up gardens”.

The long purples—

“That liberal shepherds give a grosser name
But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them.”⁴

that also figure in Ophelia’s garlands have never been satisfactorily identified. In Canon Ellacombe’s opinion they were the common purple orchis. The wild arum (*Arum maculatum*) is another possibility.

The river-side plants Shakespeare mentions are rushes, reeds, flags, and sedge, but in the case of all these it is impossible to identify the particular plants, if any, he had in mind. Rushes and reeds figured by no means inconspicuously in the everyday life of both high and low in olden times. Rushes were carpets in the houses of the rich; from the pith of the common rush poor folk made candles;

¹ *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 7.

² *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

³ *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 7.

⁴ *Ibid*.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

rushes served them on occasion for betrothal rings. Humble dwellings were frequently thatched with reeds. Reed pens were used in ancient Egyptian and Roman times. Pan's pipes made from reeds were probably unknown in this country, for the Shepherds' Pipes were made from "oaten straws"—

"When shepherds pipe on oaten straws
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks." ¹

Rushes Shakespeare mentions many times. In four passages he refers probably to the common rush (*Juncus communis*)—Rosalind's cage of rushes,² Katherine's rush candle,³ "Tib's rush for Tom's forefinger" ⁴ and "rings of rushes" ⁵. In the two last passages quoted the references are to the rush betrothal rings, which are also mentioned by Spenser in his *Shepherd's Kalendar*.

The sweet rush (*Acorus calamus*) was commonly used for strewing purposes in churches and the houses of rich folk. The First Groom in *King Henry the Fourth* (Act v, Scene 5) calls for "more rushes", Grumio inquires "Is supper ready? the house trimmed, rushes strewed, cobwebs swept?" ⁶ In the following passages the references are also to this species of rush:—

Romeo.

"Let wantons light of heart
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels."

Romeo and Juliet. Act i, Scene 4.

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost.* Act v, Scene 2.

² *As You Like It.* Act iii, Scene 2.

³ *The Taming of the Shrew.* Act iv, Scene 5.

⁴ *All's Well that Ends Well.* Act ii, Scene 2.

⁵ *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Act iv, Scene 1.

⁶ *The Taming of the Shrew.* Act iv, Scene 1.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

Iachimo.

“ Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the rushes.”

Cymbeline. Act ii, Scene 2.

Glendower.

“ She bids you on the wanton rushes lay you down.”
King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act iii, Scene 1.

“ By the light he spies
Lucretia’s glove, wherein her needle sticks ;
He takes it from the rushes where it lies.”

Lucrece.

Phœbe in *As You Like It* refers to the impression inflicted by rushes when leant upon :—

“ Lean but on a rush
The cicatrice and capable impressure
Thy palm some moments keeps.”¹

In several passages the rush figures as a symbol of worthlessness or weakness. The following may be cited :—

Dromio.

“ Some devils ask but the parings of one’s nails ;
A rush, a hair, a drop of blood, a pin.”
Comedy of Errors. Act iv, Scene 3.

Eros.

“ He’s walking in the garden thus ; and spurns
The rush that lies before him.”
Antony and Cleopatra. Act iii, Scene 5.

Marcus.

“ He that depends
Upon your favours swims with fins of lead,
And hews down oaks with rushes.”
Coriolanus. Act i, Scene 1.

Othello.

“ Man but a rush against Othello’s breast
And he retires.”
Othello. Act v, Scene 2.

¹ *As You Like It.* Act iii, Scene 5.

Wild Flowers and Native Trees

Senator.

Which yet seem shut, we have but pinned with rushes.”
Coriolanus. Act i, Scene 2.

Bastard.

“ A rush will be a beam
To hang thee on.”

King John. Act iv, Scene 3.

“ Reeds ” also stands for water-side plants in general. Ariel refers to the use of reeds for thatching :—

“ His tears run down his beard like winter’s drops
From eaves of reeds.”¹

And Portia refers to the pipes made from reeds :—

“ And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice.”²

Reeds, like rushes, figure as symbols of weakness and worthlessness. The Second Servant in *Antony and Cleopatra* speaks of “ a reed that will do me no service ”.³ And in *Cymbeline* “ To thee the reed is as the oak ”.⁴ In the passage in *Antony and Cleopatra*—

“ This common body
Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream
Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide
To rot itself with motion.”⁵

Shakespeare may have had in mind *Iris pseudo-acorus*, but it is more likely that he used the word in a generic sense to denote any plant with sword-like leaves. “ Sedge ” is equally vague and the word has been used since Anglo-

¹ *The Tempest.* Act v, Scene 1.

² *The Merchant of Venice.* Act iii, Scene 4.

³ *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act ii, Scene 7.

⁴ *Cymbeline.* Act iv, Scene 2.

⁵ *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act i, Scene 4.

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Saxon times to denote any tall, stream-side plant. The following passages may be cited :—

Benedick.

“ Alas, poor hurt fowl ! now will he creep into sedges.”
Much Ado about Nothing. Act ii, Scene 1.

Hotspur.

“ The gentle Severn’s sedgy bank.”
King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act i, Scene 3.

Second Servant.

“ And Cytherea all in sedges hid
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath.”
The Taming of the Shrew. Introduction.

Iris.

“ You nymphs, called Naiads of the winding brooks
With your sedged crowns and ever-harmless looks.”
The Tempest. Act iv, Scene 1.

Julia.

“ The current, that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know’st, being stopp’d, impatiently doth rage ;
But, when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamell’d stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage ;
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wild ocean.”
Two Gentlemen of Verona. Act ii, Scene 7.

The humbler weeds of our woodlands, fields, and waysides, mentioned in the plays are such as have always attracted the attention of country-folk—harebell, mallow, fumitory, dock, darnel, nettle, thistle, knot-grass, clover, stover, spear grass, thyme, and mosses. Shakespeare’s “ azur’d harebell ”—“ the azur’d harebell like thy veins ”¹ is almost certainly the wild hyacinth (*Scilla nutans*) for he

¹ *Cymbeline.* Act iv, Scene 2.

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associates the flower with the "pale primrose". The plant we commonly call harebell nowadays is *Campanula rotundifolia*, but in Shakespeare's day hyacinths were commonly called harebells. Gerard calls wild hyacinths "the blew Hare-bell or English Jacinth . . . they floure from the beginning of May unto the end of June". The mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) is mentioned only once¹ and ranked by Sebastian amongst nettles and docks. Fumitory is mentioned twice, but to which species Shakespeare refers it is impossible to say. "Rank fumiter" was amongst the weeds wherewith Lear when mad crowned himself:—

"Crown'd with rank fumiter, and furrow weeds,
With hoar-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flowers,
Darnel and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn." ²

"Rank fumitory" was also amongst the weeds mentioned by the Duke of Burgundy that took possession of "fallow leas", neglected during war.

"Her fallow leas
The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory
Doth root upon." ³

"Hoar-dock" has not been identified for certain. In the various editions of the plays the name is given as hordocks, hoardocks, burdocks, and harlocks. In the first folio the word is hardokes and in the quartos hardocks. Mr. S. Savage supports the view that the plant Shakespeare meant is charlock, i.e. the wild mustard, which grows commonly with the other plants Lear gathered. Darnel

¹ *The Tempest*. Act ii, Scene 1.

² *King Lear*. Act iv, Scene 4.

³ *King Henry the Fifth*. Act v, Scene 2.

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(*Lolium temulentum*) or wild rye is believed to be the tares of the Bible. Bread made from flour containing darnel is unpleasant to the taste. Hence La Pucelle's scornful remark :—

“Want ye corn for bread?
I think the Duke of Burgundy will fast
Before he'll buy again at such a rate;
'Twas full of darnel: do you like the taste?”¹

Cockle was a name loosely applied in the earlier times to any cornfield weed, but in Shakespeare's time the name was commonly restricted to darnel and what is now known as Corn cockle (*Lychnis githago*). Parkinson in his *Paradisus* both treats of and figures “Cockle or Corn wilde campion”. There are two references to the weed in the plays :—

Berowne.

“Allons! Allons! Sowed cockle reap'd no corn;
And justice always whirls in equal measure.”
Love's Labour's Lost. Act iv, Scene 3.

Coriolanus.

“We nourish 'gainst our senate,
The cockle of rebellion.”

Coriolanus. Act iii, Scene 1.

There are various references to nettles. They ranked amongst Lear's weeds² and in Ophelia's “fantastic garlands”,³ Possibly the nettles Ophelia gathered were white dead-nettles (*Lamium album*). Nettles figure in Iago's “garden-sermon”⁴ and in the Bishop of Ely's simile—

“The strawberry grows underneath the nettle.”⁵

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part i, Act iii, Scene 2.

² *King Lear.* Act iv, Scene 4.

³ *Hamlet.* Act iv, Scene 7.

⁴ *Othello.* Act i, Scene 3.

⁵ *King Henry the Fifth.* Act i, Scene 1.

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Shakespeare several times draws his imagery from nettles and uses them in proverbial phrases. The following are instances :—

Hotspur.

“I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.”

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act ii, Scene 3.

Menenius.

“We call a nettle but a nettle and
The faults of fools but folly.”

Coriolanus. Act ii, Scene 1.

King Richard.

“Yield stinging nettles to my enemies.”

King Richard the Second. Act iii, Scene 2.

Cressida.

“I’ll spring up in his tears as ’twere a nettle against May.”

Troilus and Cressida. Act i, Scene 2.

Leontes.

“Goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps.”

A Winter’s Tale. Act i, Scene 2.

Thistles Shakespeare mentions but twice. The Duke of Burgundy ranked “rough thistles”¹ with “hateful docks, kecksies, and burs”. But Shakespeare did not forget the love “humble bees” have for thistles—“Kill me a good red-hipped humble bee on the top of a thistle, and, good Monsieur, bring me the honey-bag.”²

Kecksies are the dried stems of hemlock, but the name was commonly applied to any dry weeds. Burs (still so named) are the unopened flowers of burdock (*Arctium lappa*) and they have always been noted for their clinging character. It is impossible to shake off burs. Apart from

¹ *King Henry the Fifth.* Act v, Scene 2.

² *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* Act iv, Scene 1.

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the passage in *King Henry the Fifth* cited above, all Shakespeare's references are to the clinging nature of burs.

Lucio.

"Nay, Friar, I am a kind of burr, I shall stick."

Measure for Measure. Act iv, Scene 3.

Pandarus.

"They are burs, I can tell you—they will stick where they are thrown."

Troilus and Cressida. Act iii, Scene 2.

Lysander.

"Hang off, thou cat, thou burr."

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act iii, Scene 2.

Celia.

"They are but burs, cousin, thrown upon thee in holiday foolery. If we walk not in the trodden paths, our very petticoats will catch them."

Rosalind.

"I could shake them off my coat—these burs are in my heart."

As You Like It. Act i, Scene 3.

Lysander speaks of "hindering knot-grass"—

"Get you gone, you dwarf,
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made,
You bead, you acorn."¹

Knot-grass (*Polygonum aviculare*) was formerly credited with the power of dwarfing children if given them for food, and probably Lysander's words refer to this belief. Possibly he calls it "hindering" because knot-grass is notoriously difficult to cut or to weed out. Stover was the old name for any cattle fodder. Shakespeare contrasts the turfy mountains where sheep can find food only with difficulty with "flat meads" where food is so abundant that they are as it were "thatched with stover".

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iii, Scene 2.

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Iris.

"Thy turfey mountains, where live nibbling sheep,
And flat meads thatch'd with stover them to keep."¹

Speargrass has been variously identified as reed, rush, yarrow, horse-tail, and couch grass. Various plants when thrust into the nose cause bleeding and Gerard gives Nose-bleed as a popular name for yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). "The leaves" he says "being put into the nose do cause it to bleed and ease the paine of the megrim". Shakespeare's only mention of speargrass is in *King Henry the Fourth* :—

Peto.

"He would make you believe it was done in fight and persuaded us to do the like."

Bardolph.

"Yea and to tickle our noses with speargrass to make them bleed and then to beslobber our garments with it and to swear it was the blood of true men."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

Wild thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) one of the smallest of our native sub-shrubs, is mentioned only in one of the most familiar passages in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows."²

The pig nuts Caliban offered to dig with his "long nails"³ were the tuberous roots of *Conopodium denudatum*. In Shakespeare's time they were more commonly eaten than now, and Gerard states that the Dutch ate them boiled and buttered like parsnips and carrots.

Although Shakespeare applied the epithet "idle" to

¹ *The Tempest.* Act iv, Scene 1.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.

³ *The Tempest.* Act ii, Scene 2.

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moss—"usurping ivy, briar, or idle moss"¹—and in another passage associated it with "baleful mistletoe";² he appreciated its beauty and had not failed to note that moss is at its loveliest in mid-winter, when other flowers are scarce. Arviragus, in the lovely passage about Imogen's grave, said they would deck it in summer "with fairest flowers" and, referring to the old belief that robins took moss to graves, he added the ruddock (robin) would in winter—

"bring thee all this ;
Yea, and furr'd moss, besides, when flowers are none,
To winter-ground thy corse."³

"Grass" is mentioned frequently—grass pastures bedewed "with faithful English blood"; "grassy carpets of the plain"⁴; the "lush and lusty grass"⁵ of Prospero's well nigh untrodden island; the "short-grassed green"⁶ where Iris by Juno's command summoned Ceres "a contract of true love to celebrate". In *Love's Labour's Lost* there is a reference to the lawns commonly made before pleasure pavilions where social festivities such as dances were commonly held in spring and summer.

¹ *Comedy of Errors*. Act ii, Scene 2.

² *Titus Andronicus*. Act ii, Scene 3.

³ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

The following are other references to moss :—

Oliver.

"Under an oak whose boughs were mossed with age,"

As You Like It. Act iv, Scene 3.

Atemantus.

"These mossed trees
That have outlived the eagle."

Timon of Athens. Act iv, Scene 3.

Hotspur.

"Steeple and moss-grown towers."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act iii, Scene 1.

⁴ *King Richard the Second*. Act iii, Scene 2.

⁵ *The Tempest*. Act ii, Scene 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Act iv., Scene 1.

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King.

"Say to her we have measured many miles
To tread a measure with her on this grass."

Boyet.

"They say that they have measured many a mile
To tread a measure with you on this grass."¹

Then there is the charming passage in *King Richard the Second* :—

"Suppose the singing birds musicians,
The grass whereon thou tread'st the present strew'd,
The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more
Than a delightful measure or a dance."²

In *Love's Labour's Lost* there is a reference to the old hay-dance, i.e. one of the old hay-making dances :—

Dull.

"I'll make one in a dance, or so ; or I will play
On the tabor to the Worthies, and let them dance the hay."³

The charming passage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

"When Phœbe doth behold
Her silvery visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass"⁴

is very similar to an equally lovely passage in that little-known play *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll*, as it bath bene sundrie times acted by the children of Pawles (1600)

"The light fairies danced upon the flowers
Hanging on every leaf an orient pearl."

Salanio refers to the custom of holding up a blade of grass
"to know where sits the wind".

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act v, Scene 2.

² *King Richard the Second*. Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act v, Scene 1.

⁴ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act i, Scene 1.

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“I should be still
Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind.”¹
Shakespeare several times draws his similes from grass.
The following passages are instances :—

Bishop of Ely.

“And so the prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness ; which no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet cressive in his faculty.”

King Henry the Fifth. Act i, Scene 1.

King Henry.

“mowing like grass
Your fresh fair virgins and your flowering infants.”

King Henry the Fifth. Act iii, Scene 3.

Saturninus.

“These tidings nip me, and I hang the head
As flowers with frost or grass beat down with storm.”

Titus Andronicus. Act iv, Scene 4.

The native trees and shrubs which Shakespeare mentions are the oak, willow, pine, hawthorn, yew, elm, elder, ash, birch, aspen, holly, mistletoe, ivy, box, honeysuckle, broom, gorse, bramble, dewberry, and bilberry.

Oaks are frequently mentioned and every passage testifies how closely Shakespeare had observed this tree. There is the fine description of an old oak in *As You Like It* :—

Oliver.

“Under an oak, whose boughs were moss’d with age
And high top bald with dry antiquity.”²

Again in the same play :—

First Lord.

“He lay along
Under an oak whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood.”³

¹ *Merchant of Venice.* Act i, Scene 1.

² *As You Like It.* Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 1.

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The oak loses its leaves rapidly in the first real gale of early winter and to this characteristic Timon of Athens refers :—

“ The mouths ; the tongues, the eyes, and hearts of men
At duty, more than I could frame employment ;
That numberless upon me stuck, as leaves
Do on the oak, have with one winter’s brush
Fell from their boughs, and left me open bare
For every storm that blows.” ¹

The fiercest winds Shakespeare describes are those that can rive an oak. Nestor spoke of a “splitting wind” that “makes flexible the knees of knotted oaks”,² and Casca of tempests “when the scolding winds have rived the knotty oaks”.³ Woodmen assert that the oak is more frequently struck by lightning than most trees. Hence King Lear’s allusion to “oak-cleaving thunderbolts”.⁴ The following passages may also be cited :—

Prospero.

“ To the dread rattling thunder
Have I giv’n fire, and rifted Jove’s stout oak
With his own bolt.”

The Tempest. Act v, Scene 1.

Volumnia.

“ To charge thy sulphur with a bolt
That should but rive an oak.”

Coriolanus. Act v, Scene 3.

Shakespeare several times drew his similes of solidity, hardness, soundness, and rigidity from the “unwedgeable and gnarled oak”.⁵

¹ *Timon of Athens.* Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Troilus and Cressida.* Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Julius Cæsar.* Act i, Scene 3.

⁴ *King Lear.* Act iii, Scene 2.

⁵ *Measure for Measure.* Act ii Scene 2.

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Paulina.

"As ever oak or stone was sound."

The Winter's Tale. Act ii. Scene 3.

Iago.

"She that so young could give out such a seeming
To seal her father's eyes up close as oak."

Othello. Act iii, Scene 3.

Messenger.

"And many strokes though with a little axe
Hew down and fell the hardest-timbered oak."

King Henry the Sixth. Act ii, Scene 1.

Nathaniel.

"Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll faithful prove ;
These thoughts to me were oaks, to thee like osiers bowed."

Love's Labour's Lost. Act iv, Scene 2.

Marcus.

"He that depends
Upon your favours swims with fins of lead
And hews down oaks with rushes."

Second Senator.

"The worthy fellow is our general ; he is the rock, the
oak not to be wind-shaken."

Coriolanus. Act v, Scene 2.

In *Coriolanus* there are three references to the Roman custom of presenting one who had saved the life of a fellow soldier on the battle-field with a garland of oak leaves. Volumnia said of her son : "To the cruel wars I sent him, from whence he returned his brows bound with oak."¹ Again in the next act "He comes the third time home with the oaken garland".² Cominius, too, said of him "He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed was brow bound with the oak".³ Shakespeare mentions

¹ *Coriolanus.* Act i, Scene 3.

² *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 1.

³ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 2.

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only one historic oak—that associated with the well-known legend of Herne the Hunter, the oak that figures so conspicuously in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

“There is an old tale goes that Herne the Hunter
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest
Doth all the winter time at still midnight
Walk round about an oak with great ragged horns.”¹

Acorns are mentioned five times. Prospero threatened to make Ferdinand feed on “fresh-brook mussels, wither’d roots, and husks wherein the acorn cradled”.² Celia said of Orlando “I found him under a tree like a dropt acorn”.³ Posthumus said of Iachimo “Perchance he spoke not but like a full acorn’d boar a German one cried O!”⁴ and Lysander scornfully addressed Hermia as “you bead, you acorn”.⁵ Puck’s statement:—

“All their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.”⁶

is one of the few indications Shakespeare gives of the size of his fairies.

The willow, Spenser’s “willow worne of forlorne paramoures”, Shakespeare mentions more frequently than any tree save the oak. Nearly all the references centre round the theme of the willow as the symbol of a forsaken lover. It was on a willow that the hapless Ophelia hung her garlands.⁷ Shakespeare pictures the scene as only he could. The exquisite detail of the “hoar leaves”, reflected

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act iv, Scene 4.

² *The Tempest*. Act i, Scene 2.

³ *As You Like It*. Act iii, Scene 2.

⁴ *Cymbeline*. Act ii, Scene 5.

⁵ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Act iii, Scene 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 1.

⁷ *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 7.

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in the "glassy stream", must surely have been a memory of his own childhood, for most country children who live in low-lying parts are fascinated by the grey reflections of the undersides of willow leaves in water. Desdemona's maid "had a song of willow"¹ and in the same play Emilia's song when she desired to "die in music" was "Willow, Willow, Willow".² Benedick said he had offered Claudio his company "to a willow tree either to make him a garland as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod as being worthy to be whipped".³ Cytherea "all for love forlorn" tarried for Adonis "under an osier growing by a brook"⁴ The Lady Bona sent a scornful message to King Edward:—

"Tell him, in hope he'll prove a widower shortly
I'll wear a willow garland for his sake."⁵

And to quote Lorenzo:—

"In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks."⁶

"Ranks of osiers"⁷ are still cultivated near "the murmuring stream" and from time immemorial willow wood has been used in countless ways, notably by the ancient Britons for the making of their coracles and for baskets. Canon Ellacombe states that in those far off times British baskets were exported to Rome. And it is, I think, remarkable that there are parts of these islands where one can still purchase

¹ *Othello*, Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Ibid.*, Act v, Scene 2.

³ *Much Ado About Nothing*. Act ii, Scene 1.

⁴ *The Passionate Pilgrim*.

⁵ *King Henry the Sixth*. Part iii, Act iii, Scene 3.

⁶ *The Merchant of Venice*. Act v, Scene 1.

⁷ *As You Like It*. Act iv, Scene 3.

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baskets made in exactly the same sturdy shapes as they were made by our British ancestors. Viola makes mention of a willow cabin ¹ and it was with a willow basket that Friar Laurence sallied forth at day-break to gather herbs.² For centuries the flowering shoots of the early willow (*Salix caprea*) have popularly been known as "palm" and it is to this "palm" that Rosalind referred "Look here what I found on a palm tree".³

The "lofty pine" ⁴ is mentioned almost as often as the willow, the grandest passage being that in Richard II's proud reply to the Duke of Aumerle, and it was in connection with this passage that Ruskin pointed out that with the exception of Wordsworth Shakespeare is the only English poet who has commented on the beauty of pines seen against a sunrise :—

" Discomfortable cousin ! know'st thou not,
That when the searching eye of heaven is hid
Behind the globe, that lights the lower world,
Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen,
In murders and in outrage boldly here :
But when from under this terrestrial ball
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
And darts his light through every guilty hole,
Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,
The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their backs,
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves ! " ⁵

In several passages Shakespeare draws his imagery from the pine :—

¹ *Twelfth Night*. Act i, Scene 5.

² *Romeo and Juliet*. Act ii, Scene 3.

³ *As You Like It*. Act iii, Scene 2.

⁴ *King Henry the Sixth*. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 3.

⁵ *King Richard the Second*. Act iii, Scene 2.

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Mark Antony.

"O sun, thy uprise I shall see no more,
Fortune and Antony part here. . . .

this pine is barkt
That overtopt them all." 1

Again in *Lucrece*.

“ Ah me ! the bark peeled from the lofty pine,
His leaves will wither and his sap decay,
So must my soul, her bark being peeled away.”

Agamemnon compared the seven years' checks the Greeks had received before the walls of Troy to knots in the pine :—

“Checks and disasters
Grow in the veins of actions highest rear’d;
As knots by the conflux of meeting sap
Infect the sound pine and divert his grain.”²

Belarius compared the gentleness of the “ princely boys ” to zephyrs that did not cause even the violets’ heads to wag and their roughness to—

“the rudest wind
That by the top doth take the mountain pine
And make him stoop to the vale.”³

Again Antonio, in his speech urging the impossibility of softening the heart of the enraged Shylock—

“You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops and to make no noise
When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven.” 4

It was from "a cloven pine" that Prospero rescued Ariel,⁵

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*. Act iv, Scene 12.

² *Troilus and Cressida*. Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

⁴ *The Merchant of Venice.* Act iv, Scene 1.

⁵ *The Tempest.* Act i, Scene 2.

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and in the last act when boasting of his magical powers Prospero said he had "rifted Jove's proud oak",

"And by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar." ¹

Both Shakespeare and Milton associate the hawthorn with shepherds, and to them, as to Spenser, it was "the May tree", the tree whose flowering time heralded the most joyous season of the year. The hawthorn has always been a favourite with shepherds, for it is one of the few trees that grows thickly in bleak parts and consequently affords both shade and shelter. The shelter an old thorn affords in the heaviest downpour or fiercest heat is indeed remarkable.

"Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?
O yes it doth, a thousand fold it doth." ²

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the hawthorn is again associated with shepherds:—

Helena.

"Your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear." ³

And it was a "hawthorn brake" that Quince chose for the "tyring house" for the actors, presumably for the shelter it would afford—

"This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake
our tiring house." ⁴

¹ *The Tempest*, Act v, Scene 1.

² *King Henry the Sixth*. Part iii, Act ii, Scene 5.

³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act i, Scene 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Act i, Scene 1.

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In the same play hawthorn and a lantern were the "properties" of Moonshine :—

"All I have to tell you is that the lanthorn is the moon ;
I the man in the moon ; this thorn bush, my thorn bush ;
this dog, my dog." ¹

The "dismal yew" ² is mentioned in five plays. It was under a yew that Balthasar slept and dreamt of his master's fight. ³ Slips of yew "slivered in the moon's eclipse" ⁴ were amongst the ingredients in the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*.

Paris in the churchyard scene in *Romeo and Juliet* bade his page—

"Under yond yew-trees lay thee all along
Holding thine ear close to the hollow ground
So shall no foot upon the churchyard tread—
Being loose, unfirm, with digging up of graves—
But thou shalt hear it ; Whistle them to me." ⁵

In *King Richard the Second* there is mention of the best known use of yew—the making of the long bows for archers. Scroop, telling King Richard his tidings of calamity and that well-nigh all England was for Bolingbroke, says—

"The very beadsmen learn to bend their bows
Of double-fatal yew against thy state." ⁶

Warwickshire has always been famed for its elms—"Warwickshire weeds." But Shakespeare only mentions the tree three times. Titania, twining her arms round Bottom, says—

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act v, Scene 1.

² *Titus Andronicus*. Act ii, Scene 3.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act v, Scene 3.

⁴ *Macbeth*. Act iv, Scene 1.

⁵ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act v, Scene 3.

⁶ *King Richard the Second*. Act iii, Scene 2.

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“The female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.”¹

In the *Comedy of Errors* there is a reference to the Italian custom of “marrying” the vine to the elm, i.e. training vines up elms :—

Adriana.

“Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,
Makes me with thy strength to communicate.”²

The only other reference to the tree is in *King Henry the Fourth* in the scene at the Boar’s Head, Pointz scornfully addressed Falstaff as “thou dead elm”.³

The references to the elder show Shakespeare’s knowledge of the legendary lore connected with this tree and its uses. To the tradition that Judas hanged himself on an elder tree there is a jocular reference in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Holofernes.

“Begin, sir ; you are my elder.”

Berowne.

“Well follow’d : Judas was hang’d on an elder.”⁴

The pith of the elder is extremely soft and easily removed. Children made pop-guns of the branches and hence William’s comment “That’s a perilous shot out of an elder gun”.⁵ The Host in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* contemptuously called Dr. Caius “my heart of elder”.⁶

¹ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* Act iv, Scene 1.

² *The Comedy of Errors.* Act ii, Scene 2.

³ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

⁴ *Love’s Labour’s Lost.* Act v, Scene 2.

⁵ *King Henry the Fifth.* Act iv, Scene 1.

⁶ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act ii, Scene 3.

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The elder is always credited with having a harmful influence on plants growing near it. Hence Arviragus :—

“ And let the stinking elder, grief, untwine
His perishing root with the increasing vine.”¹

The ash figures largely in our folk lore yet Shakespeare mentions this tree but once. Possibly because the ash is to be seen at its best in the north and not in the parts with which he was more familiar. Of the beauty of the tree or the valued character of its wood he says nothing. The only reference is the passing allusion in *Coriolanus* (Act iv, Scene 5).

Aufidius.

“ Let me twine
Mine arms about that body, where against
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke,
And scarred the moon with splinters.”

The birch receives almost as scant notice as the ash, the only reference being to birch-rods. The Duke in *Measure for Measure* compares the laws of his state to birch rods, so continually shown to children that they cease to fear them.

“ Now as fond fathers
Having bound up the threat'ning twigs of birch,
Only to stick it in their children's sight
For terror, not to use, in time the rod
Becomes more mock'd than fear'd.”²

The aspen, one of our native poplars, figures in two similes. The Hostess in the scene at the Boar's Head in *King Henry the Fourth* says : “ Feel, masters, how I shake . . . an't were an aspen-leaf.”³ And there is the charming simile in *Titus Andronicus* :—

¹ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

² *Measure for Measure*. Act i, Scene 3.

³ *King Henry the Fourth*. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

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“ Oh ! had the monster seen those lily hands
Tremble like aspen leaves upon a lute.”¹

Our native evergreens, which from time immemorial have figured so largely in our Christmas decorations, are scarcely mentioned. Holly is mentioned but once yet “ Blow, blow, thou winter wind ” with its refrain :—

“ Heigh-ho, sing, heigh-ho unto the green holly,
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly :
Then heigh-ho, the holly !
This life is most jolly.”²

is the most famous of holly songs, and generally known by heart even by those who may be unfamiliar with the many old carols in which holly figures.

To mistletoe (like holly mentioned but once), Shakespeare applies the epithet “ baleful ”³ in allusion presumably either to the legend of Baldur or to the fact that mistletoe derives nearly all its nourishment from its host plant and sometimes thereby kills its host. “ Usurping ivy ”⁴ is mentioned four times. In *The Winter's Tale* the Shepherd's statement—

“ They have scared away two of my best sheep ; if anyhow
I find them 'tis by the seaside browsing of ivy ”⁵

is almost a quotation from Greene's *Pandosto* (1588), the tale from which Shakespeare borrowed the plot of *The Winter's Tale*. To quote from the former “ The sheepe was browsing upon the sea-ivy whereon they greedily doe feede ”. Shakespeare twice draws his

¹ *Titus Andronicus*. Act ii, Scene 4.

² *As You Like It*. Act ii, Scene 7.

³ *Titus Andronicus*. Act ii, Scene 3.

⁴ *The Comedy of Errors*. Act ii, Scene 2.

⁵ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iii, Scene 3.

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similes from ivy. Titania compared herself when caressing Bottom to "female ivy" entringing "the barky fingers of the elm" ¹ and Prospero said of his usurping brother :—

"He was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
And suck'd my verdure out on't." ²

Box is mentioned only once. Maria told Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Sir Toby Belch, and Fabian "All three get ye into the box-tree" where they would be hidden whilst they watched Malvolio "make a contemplative idiot of himself". ³

In Shakespeare's day as now our native honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) was valued as a garden plant, but in his day chiefly for training over arbours. Hero bade Margaret tell Beatrice to steal into the "pleached bower",

"Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun
Forbid the sun to enter; like favourites
Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
Against that power that bred it." ⁴

Titania's bower was "over-canopied with lush woodbine" ⁵ and to Bottom she said—

"Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms,
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist." ⁶

Our native broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) was also cultivated in gardens. Shakespeare mentions this broom only three

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iv, Scene 1.

² *The Tempest.* Act i, Scene 2.

³ *Twelfth Night.* Act ii, Scene 5.

⁴ *Much Ado About Nothing.* Act iii, Scene 1.

⁵ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Act iv, Scene 1.

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times and in two instances the references are to "brooms" made of the pliant twigs. Puck said—

"I am sent with broom before
To sweep the dust behind the door." ¹

Again the Porter's underling in *King Henry the Eighth* (Act v, Scene 3) "At length they came to the broomstaff to me : I defied 'em still". Iris spoke of broom groves :—

"Whose shadow the dismissed bachelor loves,
Being lass-born." ²

We apply the names "furze" and "gorse" to the same plant, but Shakespeare evidently had two different plants in mind in the passage in *The Tempest* where Ariel speaks of "sharp furzes, pricking goss". But it is possible that, as Canon Ellecombe suggests, the phrase "pricking goss" was applied to any thorny plant. The only other passage in which furze is mentioned is Gonzalo's heart-felt ejaculation—

"Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre
of barren ground, long heath, brown furze, anything." ³

"Long heath" is almost undoubtedly ling (*Calluna vulgaris*).

Three wild fruits are mentioned in the plays—blackberries, dewberries, and bilberries. Rosalind said of the "love-shaked" Orlando—

"There is a young man haunts the forest . . . hangs odes upon hawthorns and elegies on brambles ; all forsooth deifying the name of Rosalind." ⁴

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act v, Scene 1.

² *The Tempest*. Act iv, Scene 1.

³ *Ibid.*, Act i, Scene 1.

⁴ *As You Like It*. Act iii, Scene 2.

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And in *Venus and Adonis* :—

“The thorny brambles and embracing bushes
As fearful of him, part, through whom he rushes.”

We still use Falstaff's phrase “as plentiful as blackberries” :—

“If reasons were as plenty as blackberries I would give
no man a reason on compulsion.”¹

In *Troilus and Cressida* blackberries are used as a symbol
of worthlessness :—

Thersites.

“That same dog-fox Ulysses is not proved worth a blackberry.”²

Again to quote Falstaff :—

“Shall the blessed sun of Heaven prove a micher and eat
blackberries ?”³

Dewberries (the fruits of *Rubus caesius*) are far more delicate and delicious than blackberries. Titania ranked dewberries with apricots, purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries :—

“Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.”⁴

Bilberries, as every country persons knows, stain the fingers and lips a blue such as is imparted by no other fruit. Hence the simile in Pistol's command :—

“Where fires thou findest unraked and hearths unswept
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry.”⁵

Thorns and briars are frequently mentioned by Shakespeare and he uses the words as they are used by country

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

² *Troilus and Cressida.* Act v, Scene 4.

³ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

⁴ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iii, Scene 1.

⁵ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act v, Scene 5.

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folk to this day to denote any thorny plants and as metaphors of troubles.

Thus the Bastard in *King John* :—

“ I am amazed methinks ; and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world.” ¹

Again Gloucester in *King Henry the Sixth* :—

“ And I—like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rents the thorns and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way,

Torment myself to catch the English crown.” ²

And to quote Rosalind :—

“ O ! how full of briars is this working day world ! ” ³

The Bishop of Carlisle in reference to Bolingbroke's usurpation of Richard II's crown said to the Abbot of Westminster :—

“ The woes to come ; the children yet unborn
Shall feel this day as sharp to them as thorn.” ⁴

Henry VI scornfully thanked his lords for their anxiety
“ to mow down thorns that would annoy our foot ”. ⁵

In *Hamlet* thorns figure as a symbol of remorse.

Ghost.

“ Leave her to Heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her.” ⁶

Romeo said of love “ it pricks like thorn ”. ⁷

¹ *King John*. Act iv, Scene 3.

² *King Henry the Sixth*. Part iii, Act iii, Scene 2.

³ *As You Like It*. Act i, Scene 3.

⁴ *King Richard the Second*. Act iv, Scene 1.

⁵ *King Henry the Sixth*. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 1.

⁶ *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 5.

⁷ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act i, Scene 4.

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The following are examples of passages in which thorns and briars stand for any thorny plants :—

King Edward.

“Brave followers, yonder stands the thorny wood.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act v, Scene 4.

Fairy.

“Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through briar.”

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act ii, Scene 1.

Hermia.

“Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briars.”

Ibid., Act iii, Scene 2.

Quintus.

“What hole is this

Whose mouth is covered with rude growing briars ?”

Titus Andronicus. Act ii, Scene 3.

The only fungi Shakespeare mentions are toadstools and mushrooms. The sole mention of toadstool is in *Troilus and Cressida*. Ajax contemptuously addressed Thersites as “Toadstool”.¹ In the three passages in which mushrooms are mentioned they are associated, as in folk-lore they have for centuries been associated—with fairies. It was generally believed that mushrooms were the handiwork of the sprites and hence the phrase “fairy rings”. It was a duty of one of Titania’s attendants “to dew her orbs upon the green”.² The grass of fairy rings is invariably a peculiarly rich green. To quote Anne Page :—

¹ *Troilus and Cressida.* Act ii, Scene 1.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.

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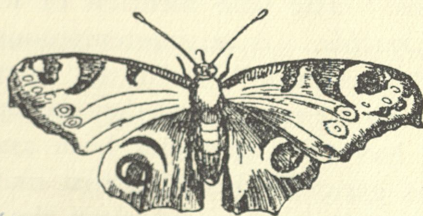
“ And nightly, meadow fairies, look you sing,
Like to the Garter’s compass, in a ring ;
The expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see.”¹

And country folk still believe that sheep do not browse
on the grass in fairy rings. Prospero referred to this
belief :—

“ You demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites ; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrumps.”²

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act v, Scene 5.

² *The Tempest*. Act v, Scene 1.



CHAPTER II

FAIRY LORE

Puck.

"How now, spirit! Whither wander you?"

Fairy.

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see;
These be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip ear,
Farewell thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
Our queen and all her elves come here anon." ¹

To the modern mind the association of mushrooms and cowslips with fairies is merely charming folk-lore, but by the audiences of Shakespeare's day it was undoubtedly regarded as solid fact. If these islands in Elizabethan times were almost as sparsely populated as in medieval days, at least in popular imagination even the most desolate parts were far from being uninhabited. The fairies, elves, ounphs, hobgoblins, and sprites who flit through the plays were very real beings to Shakespeare's contemporaries. They believed in them as naturally as they believed in trees and stones. At intervals through the centuries the statement is made that belief in fairies was common in the past

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene i.

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but unknown in the present. Chaucer stated that in King Arthur's days the fairy queen and her "jolie company" danced in our meadows but that in his day none saw them—

"In old dayes of the King Artour
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this land fulfilled of faerie ;
The elf-quene with hire jolie company
Daunsed full of te in many a grene mede ;
This was the old opinion as I rede.
I speke of many hundred yeres agoe,
But now can no man see non elves mo."

Yet two centuries later Shakespeare wrote of fairies as one who has been familiar with them and their ways from childhood. And even in these prosaic days there are still countless folk who believe in fairies and not a few assert that they have seen them. But who has seen or even knows where is fairyland? It is as sadly true now as when Spenser wrote—

"None that breatheth living aire does know
Where is that happy land of Faerie."

It is interesting to reflect on the changes elves, fairies, and all their kin, as seen through mortal eyes, have undergone through the centuries, and particularly so in connection with the plays, for Shakespeare presents to us not only the fairies and goblins of Elizabethan times, but those dating back to a remote past, beings still feared by humbler folk in his day, but well-nigh forgotten by their betters. The elves of Saxon times, of whom we have glimpses in the plays, were gigantic in stature, fearsome, and carry us back in thought to remote times, when man

Fairy Lore

fought not only with Nature for possession of the land, but against unseen beings who resented the increasing dominion of man. There are still remote parts of these islands, notably in parts of Skye, the Outer Hebrides, and Western Ireland, where the inhabitants, whose finer faculties have not been stupefied by modern inventions, not only believe in, but fear these beings. The "muckle mark-steppers", the elves who inhabited the fens "where the elk-sedge waxed in the water" and the demons with glaring eyes of Saxon literature are still realities to them, so real that these dwellers in isolated parts do not speak of them to strangers. These supernatural beings are still regarded as creatures not of light but of darkness and during the night hours their power is believed to be at its greatest. It is still asserted that they suck the breath out of mortals—

"If we obey them not, this will ensue—

They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue."¹

The "fairies" from which Imogen prayed to be delivered were not "fairies" as we understand the word, but the terrifying elves our ancestors feared:—

"To your protection I commend me, gods!
From fairies and the tempters of the night,
Guard me, beseech you!"²

Macbeth dreaded these beings:—

"Come, sealing night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale!

.

¹ *The Comedy of Errors.* Act ii, Scene 2.

² *Cymbeline.* Act ii, Scene 2.

Fairy Lore

Good things of day begin to droop and drowse ;
While's night's black agents to their preys do rouse." ¹

Prospero acknowledged that it was by invoking the aid of these terrible powers that he had dimmed the light of the sun and

"call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war ; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt : the strong based promontory
Have I made shake ; and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar ; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, op'd and let them forth
By my so potent art." ²

During the Christmas festival alone, these greatly feared beings were powerless :—

"And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time." ³

Yet in remote centuries they believed also in elves of rare beauty, bright elves exceeding in beauty the fairest of mankind. These were the "sheen bright elves" of Saxon days. Did not Cædmon, extolling the beauty of Sarah, describe her as "sheen as an elf"? Ariel conveys but little to our dulled minds, but in that glittering elf a Saxon audience would have recognized a being familiar to them from childhood. For Ariel is the old English bright elf and Prospero subdued him with magic as our ancestors subdued elves with incantations and herbal decoctions. The nymphs with "ever harmless looks"

¹ *Macbeth*. Act iii, Scene 2.

² *The Tempest*. Act v, Scene 1.

³ *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 1.

Fairy Lore

of the brooks who made for themselves "chaste crowns" of reeds and sedges¹ are suggestive of the water elves of Saxon times. And does not the jealous yet lovable Oberon recall the Fairy King Oberon of the medieval tale, whose very dwarf was apparelled "in a gowne so rich that it were marvaile to recount the riches and fashion thereof, so garnished with precious stones that the clearnesse of them shined like the sunne".²

And in the plays the mischievous elves of medieval times play their part too. In Puck, the Celtic Phooka, Shakespeare's audiences would recognize that tormenting but beloved lord of misrule—Robin Goodfellow—known through the centuries. In the twelfth century Gervase of Tilbury wrote of impish creatures less than half an inch high, having faces wrinkled with age and dressed in patched garments. "When Englishmen ride abroad in the darkness of the night an unseen Portunos (hobgoblin) will join company with the wayfarer, and after riding awhile by his side, will at length seize the reins and lead his horse into the slough wherein he will stick and wallow while the Portunos departs with mocking laughter, thus making sport of man's simplicity." Did not Puck acknowledge that one of his practices was to "mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm"? Gervase of Tilbury states further that these mischievous sprites would come and work at night in the houses of mankind. Puck too would work for those who won his favour and bring them good luck whilst to others he was but a "shrewd and knavish sprite".

¹ *The Tempest*. Act iv, Scene 1.

² *Huon of Bordeaux*. English translation by Lord Berners. 1601.

Fairy Lore

Fairy.

“Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite,
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are you not he,
That frights the maidens of the villagery ;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn ;
And sometimes make the drink to bear no barm :
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm ?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.”¹

Where they found dust and disorder it was believed the fairies pinched the lazy maids, leaving black and blue bruises on them, for “sluts” and “sluttery” were abhorred by the Fairy Queen. To attempt to watch the fairies at work was to court instant death.

Anne Page.

“Fairies, black, gray, green and white,
You moonshine revellers, and shades of night,
You orphan heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hobgoblin, make the fairy oyes.”

Pistol.

“Elves, list your names ; silence, you aery toys.
Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap :
Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry :
Our radiant Queen hates sluts and sluttery.”

Sir John Falstaff.

“They are fairies ; he that speaks to them shall die :
I'll wink and couch : no man their works must eye.”²

Like Puck, the elves and ouths were credited with bringing good luck to those whom they thought worthy of it. Anne Page exhorted them to strew good luck in Windsor Castle :—

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.

² *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act v, Scene 5.

Fairy Lore

“ About, about !

Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out :
Strew good luck, oughs, on every sacred room,
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome, as in state 'tis fit,
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.
The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm, and every precious flower :
Each fair instalment, coat, and several crest,
With loyal blazon, ever more be blest !
And nightly, meadow-fairies, look you sing,
Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring :
The expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see :
And *Honi soit qui mal y pense* write
In emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue, and white :
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee :
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.”¹

These impish spirits were believed to have the power of changing their guise in countless ways. It was thus they tormented the hapless Caliban—

“ Sometimes like apes, that mow and chatter at me,
And after bite me, then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount
Their pricks at my footfall ; sometime am I
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness.”²

Even their Queen, the Queen Mab of the popular tales, was impish and as such Shakespeare depicts her :—

“ She comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the forefinger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Over men's noses as they lie asleep :

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act v, Scene 5.

² *The Tempest*. Act ii, Scene 2.

Fairy Lore

Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs ;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers ;
The traces, of the smallest spider's web ;
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams ;
Her whip, of cricket's bone ; the lash, of film ;
Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid.
Her chariot is an empty hazel nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,
Time out of mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love :
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight :
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees :
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream :
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.
Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit :
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail,
Tickling a parson's nose as a' lies asleep,
Then dreams he of another benefice.
Sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep : and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts, and wakes :
And, being thus frightened, swears a prayer or two,
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab,
That plats the manes of horses in the night :
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which, once untangled, much misfortune bodes." ¹

At times it pleased the beneficent elves to bestow wealth in the shape of fairy gold on humans, but he who revealed his good fortune lost it. Thus in *The Winter's Tale* :—

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act i, Scene 4.

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Shepherd.

"So, let's see : it was told me I should be rich by the fairies ; this is some changeling : open't. What's within, boy ?"

Clown.

"You're a made old man : if the sins of your youth are forgiven you, you're well to live. Gold ! all gold !"

Shepherd.

"This is fairy gold, boy, and 'twill prove so ; up with't. keep it close : home, home, the next way, We are lucky, boy ; and to be so still, requires nothing but secrecy." ¹

It was with a tale of "sprites and goblins" that Mamillius offered to entertain Hermione :—

Mamillius.

"A sad tale's best for winter : I have one
Of sprites and goblins."

Hermione.

"Let's have that, good sir.
Come and sit down :—Come on and do your best
To fright me with your sprites ; you're powerful at it." ²

Shakespeare ranged the realm of fairy-lore and he did more than any other writer to turn men's minds from the dread elves, the joyless impersonations and creatures of darkness of medieval times to the fairies we associate with flowers and everything that is lovely. "Fairies use flowers for their character" ³ and Shakespeare's fairies are indissolubly associated with flowers.

The fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are genuinely childlike and consequently entrancing. They are easily frightened and, like children, their first instinct when startled is to hide themselves—

¹ *The Winter's Tale.* Act iii, Scene 3.

² *The Winters Tale.* Act ii, Scene 1.

³ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act v, Scene 5.

Fairy Lore

“ All their elves for fear,
Creep into acorn-cups, and hide them there.” ¹

Like children they have a horror of creeping things such as “ spotted snakes ” and blind-worms and insects such as “ long-legged spinners ” and “ beetles black ”, and such must not come nigh their sleeping queen.²

Titania’s attendants, whose very names are suggestive of those given each other in play by children, throw themselves with abandon and delight into the task of waiting on Bottom and entertaining him. To “ hop and gambol in his walks ” to feed him with fruits, and to steal honeybags from the humble bees are enchanting pastimes for them. Like children they delight in frolicsome games, to dance in “ ringlets ” ³ to “ hop as light as bird from brier ” ⁴ and to sing ditties while they “ dance it trippingly ”. ⁴ They love lullabies—

“ Philomel, with lullaby
Sing in our sweet lullaby ;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby ; lulla, lulla, lullaby :
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh,
So, good night with lullaby.” ⁵

Being childlike themselves they have a fondness for children and from time immemorial have been accused of stealing them. Oberon and Titania’s quarrel was over

“ A lovely boy stol’n from an Indian King
She never had so sweet a changeling.” ⁶

¹ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Act ii, Scene i.

² *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 2.

³ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Act v, Scene 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene 1.





Fairy Lore

Unlike the dark elves the fairies are creatures of moon-light and dawn and when the first beams of light irradiate the dew-drops in the meadows they flit amongst the flowers—

“ I must go seek some dew drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslips ear.” ¹

Shakespeare's unique contribution to the realm of Faerie was Titania. Queen Mab's outstanding characteristic was impishness, but the exquisite Titania, Shakespeare's own creation, is a queen, albeit a wayward queen, whose passing fancy for a mortal is in keeping with the most ancient traditions of Faerie. A queen who holds her court in groves and on greens by “spangled starlight sheen”,² who dances “to the whistling wind”³—

“ By paved fountain or by rushy brook
Or on the beached margent of the sea.” ⁴

and who, sung to sleep by her attendant fairies, slumbers on a bank—

“ where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight.” ⁵

Like her attendant fairies, she is a creature of summer not winter—

“ The summer still doth tend upon my state.” ⁶

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene i.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.* Act ii, Scene i

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, Act ii, Scene i.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Act iii, Scene i.

Fairy Lore

When winter comes she follows the sun to gambol on the sands "in the spiced Indian air by night".¹

Yet, Oberon, Titania, and all their train were confined, in common with the whole world of Faerie, to the hours of darkness. With the lark's song they had perforce to vanish—

Puck.

"Fairy king, attend, and mark :
I do hear the morning lark."

Oberon.

"Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after the night's shade :
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wandering moon." ²

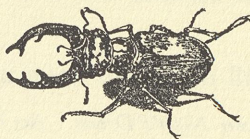
Oberon proudly claimed, however, that being "spirits of another sort" than the "damned spirits" they can remain longer than the latter and tread the groves—

"Even till the eastern gate all fiery-red
Opening on Neptune, with fair blessed beams
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams." ³

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene i.

² *Ibid.*, Act iv, Scene i.

³ *Ibid.*, Act iii, Scene 2.



CHAPTER III

GARDENS, ORCHARDS, AND VINEYARDS

In one of his happiest phrases Shakespeare dubbed this island "our sea-walled garden"¹ and fortunately this epithet is as true to-day as when he wrote it. Britain is pre-eminently the land of gardens. Like ourselves, the Elizabethans found recreation for the body and refreshment for the mind in gardening, and the art was cultivated by high and low alike. The strong rule of the Tudors had ushered in a period of peace and prosperity and the sixteenth century witnessed the transition from the comparatively small medieval enclosure to the stately pleasance of Elizabethan times. The garden world of the Tudor period was crowded with notabilities—theologians such as Sir Thomas More; statesmen such as the Protector Somerset; men of letters, such as Lord Bacon and Sir Philip Sidney; courtiers, such as Sir Hugh Plat; great London merchants and citizens, such as Master Nicholas Leate and Master Ralph Tuggie; and herbalists, such as William Turner, John Gerard, and John Parkinson.

There is abundant evidence that Shakespeare was familiar with many a noble garden and smaller plots owned by humbler folk whose names are unknown to us, but who, like the majority of our race in all parts of the world, nowadays, found their chief delight in their homes and gardens.

Twenty-nine of the scenes in Shakespeare's plays are laid in gardens and orchards, but in one case only is the garden specified as a garden known in his day—"The

¹ *King Richard the Second*. Act iii, Scene 4.

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Temple Garden, London." What gardens, that he knew, had he in mind in the other scenes?

Traditionally Shakespeare's name is associated with two famous gardens still in existence—those of Wilton House and St. John's College, Oxford. There is a well-founded tradition that Shakespeare acted in *As You Like It* at Wilton on the occasion of James I's visit to William, third Earl of Pembroke, son of Mary Sidney (who married the second earl) and nephew of Sir Philip Sidney. It is generally believed that the "W.H." to whom Shakespeare's sonnets are addressed was this member of the Herbert family, and to him and his brother—"the most noble and incomparable pair of brethren William Earl of Pembroke and Philip, Earl of Montgomery" he dedicated the early folios, "because they prosecuted Plays and Author with so much favour." Shakespeare was but one of the many "learned and ingenious persons" whose names are associated with Wilton, for Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, all enjoyed the friendship of the Herberts, and it was at Wilton that Sir Philip Sidney wrote his "Arcadia" and with his sister translated the Psalms.

It is more than probable that on the occasion of James I's visit, *As You Like It* was acted in the garden. Even in Shakespeare's day, Wilton Garden was already eight centuries old, one of the oldest in England. In 800, when dying, Egbert, the Saxon King, transformed the oratory founded by Earl Wulstan in 773 into a Benedictine priory, and his sister Alburga (widow of Wulstan) became the first prioress. In 871 King Alfred fought against the Danes at Wilton and during the fight his baby daughter, Princess

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Elfreda, was abandoned by her nurse and drowned in her bath. In her memory the King made Wilton an Abbey, endowing it with valuable property. For centuries this abbey was one of the most famous in this island, and princesses and daughters of noble houses were sent there to be educated. Amongst the pupils in the eleventh century was Edith, daughter of Earl Godwin, and subsequently wife of Edward the Confessor. She subsequently rebuilt the abbey and retired there after the death of the Confessor. Until the Reformation, Wilton was renowned as an educational centre and to quote John Aubrey, the Wiltshire historian—"the young mayds were brought up (not as at Hakney, Sarum School, etc. to learn pride and wantonnesse) but at the Nunneries where . . . they learnt needlework, the art of confectionery, surgery (anciently no apothecaries or surgeons—the gentlewomen did cure their poore neighbours: their hands are now too fine . . .) physick, writing, drawing, etc. . . . This was a fine way of breeding up young women who are led more by example than precept."

Exactly what Wilton garden was like when Shakespeare acted there we do not know for certain, but it would doubtless have been very similar to what it was in Charles I's time, and of this we have a pictorial plan in that rare book, *Wilton Garden* by Isaac de Caux. The third Earl of Pembroke was an intimate friend of Charles I, who stayed at Wilton every summer until the Civil War, and it was at the King's suggestion that part of the house was rebuilt and the garden altered to the design of Isaac de Caux. Amongst the outstanding features of this magnificent garden as shown in the pictorial plan are the "curious knotted

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gardens" and "pleached alleys". The wooded part with the river Nader flowing through it was left untouched and to the spectators of Shakespeare's day many lines in *As You Like It* must have conjured up memories of these woods, notably :—

"Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note,
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather." ¹

Is the garden of St. John's College, Oxford, connected with any of Shakespeare's plays? No less an authority than the late Dean Hutton states that Shakespeare doubtless visited St. John's, and he even goes so far as to picture a meeting between Laud and Shakespeare. According to Aubrey it was Shakespeare's custom to stay at John Davenant's Inn at Oxford every year on his way to Warmeholme. John Davenant's son Robert, an intimate friend of Shakespeare's, was a Fellow of St. John's, and Aubrey states—"I have heard Parson Robert say that Mr. W. Shakespeare has given him a hundred kisses." In Shakespeare's time the founder's elm was still standing, for when Dr. Levinz was President (1873-97) he used to show the old elm in his garden as the tree of Sir Thomas White's dream. According to the tradition recorded by Griffin Higgs, the seventeenth-century biographer of the Founder, Sir Thomas saw in a dream a great elm which should

¹ *As You Like It*. Act ii, Scene 5.

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mark the site of the college he desired to found. Long he sought and one day, riding past the gateway of St. Bernard's, he saw the tree of his dream. An old man, Triplet by name, is said to have held his horses' bridle, whilst Sir Thomas knelt down to give thanks for having the site revealed to him.

Was Shakespeare familiar with the garden belonging to Gerard, the author of the famous herbal? I think there is very little doubt that he was. For Shakespeare and Gerard were near neighbours when the latter was at the height of his fame. From 1598 to 1604 Shakespeare lived in the house of Mountjoy, a Huguenot refugee, and this house was at the corner of Mugwell Street (now Monkswell Street) and Silver Street. Gerard's garden is now believed to have been on part of the site of what is now Fetter Lane. Apart from being near neighbours, the house where Shakespeare lodged was just opposite the Barber-Surgeons' Hall, and in 1598 and again in 1607 Gerard was appointed examiner of candidates for admission to the freedom of the Barber-Surgeons' Company. The population of London in those days was comparatively small and two such distinguished men could scarcely have failed to know each other. Is it even likely that Shakespeare, whose own writings are so full of herb-lore, was unacquainted with the garden of the greatest herbalist of the day, when for six years they were near neighbours? Agas's pictorial map (*circa* 1560) gives an excellent idea of this neighbourhood in Tudor times.

But how difficult it is, even with Agas's map, to visualize the London of those days when Gerard could find wild bugloss growing "in the drie ditch banks about Piccadilla"

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and in Gray's Inn mallow, shepherd's purse, sweet woodruff, bugle, and Paul's betony, and in the neighbouring meadows "the sad coloured rocket", red-flowered clary, white saxifrage, lesser hawthorn, and the strawberry-headed trefoil. The city then was not above two miles across and in many respects must have looked like a large village.

And "in the month of May" to quote Stowe "namely on May-day in the morning, every man except impediment, would walk in the sweet meddowes and green-woods, ther to rejoyce their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers and with the harmonie of birds praying God in their kinds". At Christmas time, not only churches and private houses, but to quote Stowe again "the Conduits and Standards in the streetes were garnished with Holm (holly) Ivie, Bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeere aforded to be greene".

The Strand in Shakespeare's time was lined with magnificent palaces, their gardens sloping to the river. How many must have watched from those gardens the great nobles' barges, with the rowers in their picturesque liveries, passing up and down "the silver-streaming Thames", then silver indeed, the unsullied highway of London. Queen Elizabeth was frequently to be seen on her way to Westminster Palace Water Gate, then known as The Queen's Stairs. Holborn in those days was a village, the great house being Ely House, which in Shakespeare's day was one of the most important palaces in the vicinity of London. In this garden grew the celebrated strawberries, desired by the Duke of Gloucester (afterwards Richard III) and for which he asked at the council meeting held to make

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arrangements for the coronation of the young king Edward V.

Gloucester.

“My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn,
I saw good strawberries in your garden there;
I do beseech you, send for some of them.

Ely.

“Marry, I will, my lord, with all my heart.”¹

Shakespeare in this (even to the detail “I have been long a sleeper”) closely follows Holinshed, who states “On the Friday (being the 13th of June, 1483), many lords were assembled in the Tower, and there sat in council devising the honourable solemnity of the King’s (the young Edward V’s) coronation of which the time appointed then so near approached that the pageants and subtleties were in making day and night at Westminster . . . These lords so sitting together, communing of this matter, the Protector (Gloucester) came in amongst them, just about nine of the clock, saluting them courteously, and excusing himself that he had been from them so long, saying merrily that he had been a sleeper that day. After a little talking with them, he said unto the Bishop of Ely, ‘My lord, you have very good strawberries at your garden in Holborn; I require you let us have a mess of them.’ ‘Gladly, my lord,’ quoth he. ‘Would God I had some better, they are ready to your pleasure as that.’ And therewithal in all haste, he sent his servant for a mess of strawberries”.

Shakespeare was doubtless familiar with the garden of Ely House during the six years he lived with Mountjoy.

¹ *King Richard the Third.* Act iii, Scene 4.

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Even then this garden was over two centuries old. In the thirteenth century the Bishops of Ely had their London residence in the Temple, but in 1290 John de Kirkeby, Bishop of Ely, left by his will a messuage and nine cottages in Holborn to his successors. His successor, William de Luda, built the chapel of St. Etheldreda and in Edward III's reign John de Hotham, Bishop of Ely, greatly improved the property and added a vineyard, orchard, and kitchen garden. Arundel, who subsequently became Archbishop of Canterbury, added the great gate house. John of Gaunt died at Ely House in 1399, though it is not certain how he came to be living there. Possibly because his palace of the Savoy had been burnt during Wat Tyler's rebellion. According to Froissart, John of Gaunt died "about the feast of Christmas". Shakespeare, who probably knew the house well, set the scene of Gaunt's death in "A room in Ely-house" and there just before he died he admonished his dissipated nephew, Richard II, who taunted him as "a lunatic, lean-witted fool".

Gaunt.

"O spare me not, my brother Edward's son

And thy unkindness be like crooked age
To crop at once a too-long wither'd flower.
Live in thy shame, but die not shame with thee!
These words hereafter thy tormenters be!
Convey me to my bed, then to my grave:
Love they to live, that love and honour have."¹

When Shakespeare came to live in Mountjoy's house, Ely House was once more in the possession of the Bishops

¹ *King Richard the Second.* Act ii, Scene i.

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of Ely, but from 1576 to 1591 the best part of the house and all the gardens and orchards were owned by Elizabeth's handsome Lord Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton, who, according to tradition, owed the favour of his sovereign to his skill in dancing. In 1576 Richard Cox, the then Bishop of Ely, was forced by the Queen to grant on a twenty-one year's lease the best part of his house, together with fourteen acres of ground, the gardens and orchards, to Sir Christopher Hatton. The rent was a red rose for the gate-house and garden and for the remainder ten loads of hay and ten pounds sterling a year. The bishop reserved to himself the right of free access to the garden at all times and to gather twenty bushels of roses yearly. In complying with the royal command the bishop was unaware that he had been forced to accept what would prove to be the most famous of all rose-rents.

Subsequently Sir Christopher tried to obtain the whole of the property, but he already owed the Queen forty thousand pounds, and with one of her sudden changes of mood, she ordered him to repay it. This reverse of fortune killed him. He died at Ely House in 1591. Fuller, in his "Worthies", says "the Queen afterwards did endeavour what she could to recover him, bringing as some say cordial broths unto him with her own hands; but all would not do. There's no pulley can draw up a heart once cast down, though a queen herself should set her hand thereon".

After the death of the eccentric Lady Hatton (widow of Sir Christopher's nephew) Ely House again came into the possession of the see of Ely and it remained their property until late in the eighteenth century, when all

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the rights were transferred to the crown in exchange for a mansion in Dover Street, Piccadilly.

In Agas's map, the kitchen garden, orchard, vineyard, and meadow of Ely House are all marked and to this day the names of Vine Street, Saffron Hill, Field Lane, and Turnmill Street, commemorate parts of this famous property.

In Shakespeare's day another garden in this vicinity—that of Gray's Inn—was only less famed than that of Ely Place. It was the favourite resort of Bacon, who planted the elms there and erected a summer house on a mound on the terrace, whence there was an uninterrupted view of Hampstead. This has long since disappeared, but as late as 1754 there was a canopied seat in the gardens which Bacon put there in memory of his friend Jeremiah Betttenham.

The other London garden immortalized by Shakespeare—the Inner Temple garden, the scene of the rival roses—had probably been a garden since the Templars moved from Holborn and built their vast monastery by the river-side. In 1185 Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had come to invoke Henry II's aid against Saladin, consecrated the church dedicated by the Order of the Knights Templars to the Virgin Mary. In laying the scene of the rival roses in the Temple garden, Shakespeare relied probably on tradition, for historically it has no foundation. During the early years of the nineteenth century, according to Thornbury (*Old and New London*) the white rose of York and the red rose of Lancaster were still grown in the Inner Temple garden. As late as 1864 Broome (gardener of the Inner Temple) exhibited at the Horticultural Society's

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Show twenty-four bunches of roses grown in this garden.

This garden seems full of ghosts of austere white-robed Knights Templar, but in popular imagination it is for ever associated with that notable scene in *King Henry the Sixth*¹ :—

Earl of Suffolk.

“Within the Temple-hall we were too loud ;
The garden here is more convenient.”

.

Richard Plantagenet.

“Since you are tongue-tied and so loth to speak
In dumb significants proclaim your thoughts :
Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this brier pluck a white rose with me.”

Earl of Somerset.

“Let him that is no coward, nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.”

Earl of Warwick.

“I love no colours : and, without all colour
Of base insinuating flattery,
I pluck this white rose with Plantagenet.”

Earl of Suffolk.

“I pluck this red rose with young Somerset ;
And say withal, I think he held the right.”

Vernon.

“Stay, lords and gentlemen, and pluck no more,
Till you conclude that he, upon whose side
The fewest roses are cropp’d from the tree,
Shall yield the other in the right opinion.”

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

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Earl of Somerset.

"Good, Master Vernon, it is well objected ;
If I have fewest, I subscribe in silence."

Richard Plantagenet.

"And I."

Vernon.

"Then for the truth and plainness of the case,
I pluck this pale and maiden blossom here,
Giving my verdict on the white rose side."

Earl of Somerset.

"Prick not your finger as you pluck it off,
Lest, bleeding, you do paint the white rose red,
And fall on my side, so, against your will."

Vernon.

"If, I, my lord, for my opinion bleed,
Opinion shall be surgeon to my hurt,
And keep me on the side where still I am."

Earl of Somerset.

"Well. well, come on : who else ? "

Lawyer.

"Unless my study and my books be false,
The argument you held was wrong in you :
In sign whereof, I pluck a white rose too."

Richard Plantagenet.

"Now Somerset, where is your argument ? "

Earl of Somerset.

"Here, in my scabbard : meditating that,
Shall dye your white rose in a bloody red."

Richard Plantagenet.

"Meantime, your cheeks do counterfeit our roses :
For pale they look with fear, as witnessing
The truth on our side."

Earl of Somerset.

"No, Plantagenet,
'Tis not for fear, but anger, that thy cheeks
Blush for pure shame, to counterfeit our roses,
And yet thy tongue will not confess thy error."

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Richard Plantagenet.

"Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?"

Earl of Somerset.

"Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?"

Richard Plantagenet.

"Ay, sharp and piercing, to maintain his truth,
Whiles thy consuming canker eats his falsehood."

Earl of Somerset.

"Well, I'll find friends to wear my bleeding roses,
That shall maintain what I have said is true,
Where false Plantagenet dare not be seen."

Richard Plantagenet.

"Now, by this maiden blossom in my hand,
I scorn thee and thy faction, peevish boy."

Earl of Suffolk.

"Turn not thy scorn this way, Plantagenet,
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Richard Plantagenet.

"And by my soul, this pale and angry rose,
As cognizance of my blood-drinking hate,
Will I for ever, and my faction, wear,
Until it wither with me to my grave,
Or flourish to the height of my degree."

Earl of Suffolk.

"Go forward and be choked with thy ambition;
And so farewell, until I meet thee next." (*Exit.*)

Earl of Somerset.

"Have with thee, Pole.—Farewell ambitious Richard."
(*Exit.*)

Richard Plantagenet.

"How I am braved, and must perforce endure it!"

Earl of Warwick.

"This blot, that they object against your house,
Shall be wip'd out in the next Parliament,
Call'd for the truce of Winchester and Gloster;
And if thou be not then created York,

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I will not live to be accounted Warwick.
Meantime, in signal of my love to thee,
Against proud Somerset, and William Pole,
Will I upon thy party wear this rose.
And here I prophesy :—this brawl to-day,
Grown to this faction in the Temple garden,
Shall send, between the red rose and the white,
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.”

Richard Plantagenet.

“ Good Master Vernon, I am bound to you,
That you on my behalf would pluck a flower.”

Vernon.

“ In your behalf still will I wear the same.”

Lanyer.

“ And so will I .”

Richard Plantagenet.

“ Thanks, gentle sir.

Come, let us four to dinner ; I dare say,
This quarrel will drink blood another day.”

One noted garden in the city of London is in the same ownership now as it was in Shakespeare’s time. I refer to the garden of the Drapers’ Company. In Henry VIII’s reign this property belonged to Thomas Cromwell, when he was Secretary of State, and in Agas’s map the fortress-like dwelling he erected is clearly depicted. The garden then was comparatively small and Cromwell desired to enlarge it. For the man who was second only to the King this was an affair of the utmost simplicity. He sent men to remove his neighbour’s palings without even troubling to inform the said neighbours, and in each case took twenty-two feet of ground, enclosing the space thus gained with a high brick wall. One of the victims was the father of Stowe, the author of the famous survey of London, and Stowe records the incident thus :—

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"This house being finished and having some reasonable plot of ground left for a garden, hee caused the pales of the gardens adjoining to the north parte thereof, on a sodaine, to bee taken down, twenty-two foote to be measured forth right into the north of everyman's ground, a line there to be drawne, a trench to be cast, a foundation laid, and a high bricke wall to be builded.

"My father had a garden there, and an house standing close to his south pale; this house they loosed from the ground, and bore upon rollers into my father's garden, twenty-two foot, ere my father heard thereof. No warning was given him, nor other answere, when hee spoke to the surveyor of that worke, but that their mayster, Sir Thomas, commanded them so to doe; no man durst go to argue the matter, but each man lost his land, and my father payde his whole rent, which was VI^s VIII^d the yeare for that halfe which was left. Thus much of mine owne knowledge have I thought goode to note, that the sodaine rising of some men causeth them to forget themselves".¹

When Cromwell was beheaded the Drapers' Company bought the property from the king and have held it ever since. Cromwell's magnificent dwelling was destroyed in the Great Fire.

And Shakespeare must surely have been familiar with what is now the oldest garden in London—the "College garden" of Westminster Abbey. In Edward the Confessor's reign this was the infirmary garden. The Little Cloister was the infirmary in the fourteenth century and possibly Shakespeare passed many times through the vaulted,

¹ *Survey of London*, 1598.

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sombre entrance leading from the "Dark Entry" which dates from the Confessor's time.

In what other literature are the beauty, the fragrance, and above all, the atmosphere of Tudor gardens depicted as in Shakespeare's writings? His references to gardens are like brilliant flash-lights turned for a moment on to various aspects of typical Elizabethan pleasantries. How vividly those formal plots "circumwalled with brick", with their "curious knotted gardens", their "pleached bowers where honeysuckles ripened by the sun forbid the sun to enter", their mazes, "close walks", quiet walks", "thick pleached alleys", "private plots", "princess's pavilions", "summer bowers", "silver fountains", sundials, and flower-beds are set before us.

Those beds, railed or enclosed with trellis work, were never planted as they are nowadays, with flowers all of one colour, but posy-fashion, in mixed colours, as Shakespeare described them:—

"Emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue and white,
Like sapphires, pearls and rich embroidery." ¹

Parkinson in his *Paradisus* describes tulips so planted "one colour answering and setting of another that the place where they stand may resemble a piece of curious needlework or a piece of painting".

In how few words Shakespeare depicts sunrise in the garden, moonlight, the beauty of the unfolding buds, the scents of roses, the rich beauty of carnations, the purity of the lily (the flower that to Shakespeare as to Spenser was "the lady of the flow'ring field") the fragrance and colours of pinks, honeysuckles, larksheels, marigolds,

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act v, Scene 5.

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columbines, fleur de luce, to mention but a few. His "thousand fragrant posies" fill the air with their perfume.

Is there in any foreign literature a lyric as lovely as Shakespeare's lyric of sunrise in a garden? A garden so full of dew that the horses of the sun can be watered at "the springs on chaliced flowers", the garden awaking to the glory of day to the music of the lark's song :—

"Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies
And winking Mary-buds begin to op'e their golden eyes.
With everything that pretty is, My lady sweet, arise."

A miniature of early morning is enshrined in the brief phrase, "the morn dew on the myrtle leaf,"¹ the "soft myrtle" that Isabella contrasted with "the gnarled, unwedgeable oak". Nor does he forget the kisses bestowed by the sun on "those fresh morning drops upon the rose :—

"So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose." ²

Again to quote Petruchio :—

"Say that she frown ; I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses newly washt with dew." ³

Nor the garden in moonlight, when "weeps each little flower" with dew, when the herbs "have on them the cold dew o' the night",⁴ and the tops of the trees in the orchard are a gleam in the moon's rays.

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*. Act iii, Scene 12.

² *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *The Taming of the Shrew*. Act ii, Scene 1.

⁴ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

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“By yonder blessed moon I swear
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops.”¹

To Shakespeare as to all true country folk, the unfolding of a bud was a mystery of rare fascination, the bud itself a symbol of immaculate purity :—

Claudio.

“You seemed to me as Dian in her orb
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown.”²

And that great master of the human heart compared the opening of a bud to the awakening of love :—

“This bud of love, by summer’s ripening breath
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.”³

Again :—

“She never told her love
But let concealment, like a worm i’ the bud
Feed on her damask cheek.”⁴

And the devastating effect of love on “the young and tender wit” he compares to an “eating canker” :—

Proteus.

“As in the sweetest bud
The eating canker dwells, so eating love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all.”

Valentine.

“And writers say, as the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
Even so by love the young and tender wit
Is turned to folly, blasting in the bud
Losing his verdure even in the prime
And all the fair effects of future hopes.”⁵

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene i.

² *Much Ado about Nothing.* Act iv, Scene i.

³ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene i.

⁴ *Twelfth Night.* Act ii, Scene 4.

⁵ *Two Gentlemen of Verona.* Act i, Scene i.

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In one passage Shakespeare describes gardens yet to be made as "maiden gardens", a charming play of fancy :—

"Now stand you on the top of happy hours ;
And many maiden gardens yet unset,
With virtuous wish would bear you living flowers." ¹

Nor must we forget the references to the delightful garden needlework of the period, an art in which every girl "of noble race" was trained :—

Gower.

" and with her needle composes
Nature's own shapes, of bud, bird, branch or berry
That even her art sisters the natural roses :
Her inkle, silk, twin with the rubied cherry.
That pupils lacks she none of noble race." ²

And to quote Helena upbraiding Hermia :—

"We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needls created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion." ³

Those who wrought this exquisite needlework, now so highly valued, must have used living flowers and fruits for their models, for patterns in the modern sense were unknown. Indeed it is impossible to look at any fine example of this work without realizing that the spontaneous freshness and beauty of design owed much to the fact that the worker copied from Nature, and in most cases with the additional zest of using flowers and fruits from her own garden.

We have abundant information regarding the

¹ Sonnet xvi.

² *Pericles*. Act v, Chorus.

³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act iii, Scene 2.

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characteristics of gardens in Shakespeare's time.¹ They were usually "circummured with brick" and there is an illustration of a garden so enclosed in Hyll's *Proffitable Arte of Gardening* (1568). Those who could not afford brick walls made walls of earth and straw worked together and coped with straw. Lawson in his *New Orchard and Garden* (1618) condemns these mud walls unless "well copt with Clooe and Morter whereon at Michael-tide it will be good to sow wall-flowers, commonly called Bee-flowers or winter Gilly-flowers because they will grow (though amongst stones) and abide the strongest frost and drought, continually green and flowering even in winter, and have a pleasant smell and are timely (that is they will flower the first and last of flowers) and are good for bees. And your earthen wall is good for bees, dry and warm". These mud walls coped with straw must have been very picturesque, especially in wall-flower time and it is interesting to remember that even as late as the eighteenth century they were still common. John Lawrence (the first parson to write a gardening book) states in his *Clergyman's Recreation* (1714) that mud walls were the best for ripening fruit and that the coping of straw served to shelter fruit from rain.

Stately gardens were commonly overlooked by a terrace running the whole width of the house, and Shakespeare was doubtless familiar with the "pleasant terrace" at Kenilworth, described by Robert Laneham in a letter to Humphrey Martin, Mercer of London. The letter is dated 1575 and was written on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's

¹ In my *Story of the Garden* I wrote at considerable length on Tudor gardens and therefore I am devoting no space to the subject in general here, except in conjunction with references to gardens in the plays, etc.

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visit to the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth. Describing the garden, Laneham says "all along the Castle wall is reared a pleasant terrace, ten feet high and twelve feet broad, even under foot and fresh of fine grass as is also the side thereof toward the garden". Thence the spectators could view the whole garden divided into four, with its "fair alleys", some of grass and some sanded, the great fountain, an octagonal basin in the centre of the garden, the arbors, the beds of flowers at the further end, the huge aviary, and beyond, the concourse of people passing to and fro for the pageant arranged in the Queen's honour.

As in medieval times even small gardens were divided into separate enclosures by hedges or trellis work. The best enclosure was usually the privy garden. Nowadays we are apt to associate the phrase "privy garden" with royal gardens, but "privy plots", as they were commonly known, were features of most gardens of any size. It was in a privy plot in the Duke of York's garden that the Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Salisbury acknowledged the Duke of York's claim to the throne to be just and offered him their fealty:—

Earl of Warwick.

"Till Lionel's issue fails, his should not reign :
It fails not yet, but flourishes in thee,
And in thy sons, fair slips of such a stock,—
Then, father Salisbury, kneel we together,
And, in this private plot, be we the first,
That shall salute our rightful sovereign,
With honour of his birthright to the crown." ¹

"Curious knotted gardens" were conspicuous features in most pleasaunces and it is to such a garden that the "fantastical Signor Armado" refers in his letter to the

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene 2.

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King—"It standeth north-north east and by east from the west corner of thy curious knotted garden: there did I see that low-spirited swain".¹

Plans for knot gardens are to be found in nearly all sixteenth and seventeenth century gardening books. The designs were laid out in low, close-growing shrubs, such as hyssop, lavender, germander, or thyme. Parkinson mentions santolina being used for this purpose—"the rarity and novelty of this herbe being for the most part but in the gardens of great persons, doth cause it to be of the greater regard." Thomas Hyll, however, in his *Proffitable Arte of Gardening*, mentions lavender cotton with hyssop and thyme as commonly used. Thrift Parkinson speaks of as "the most anciently received" for making knots. Box, either as an edging or for making the designs of knot gardens, Shakespeare may not have seen, for Parkinson writes of it as a novelty and "only received into the Gardens of those that are curious". The interstices of the designs were filled with flowers of all different sorts and colours making a posy-like effect. And now we are returning to these posy-like gardens. A few years ago it was still customary, as in Victorian times, to plant beds of tulips, wallflowers, etc., all of one colour, and the effect was impressive and dull. But what more delightful and more typically English than a garden like a spring nosegay—no two flowers of the same kind together—wallflowers, tulips, forget-me-nots, narcissi, double daisies, polyanthuses, and so forth. A posy of flowers like a picture by one of the old Dutch flower painters—a continual feast of varied colours and shapes.

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act i, Scene 1.

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Fountains were of great magnificence, doubtless owing to Italian influence. To Elizabethans the fountain was indeed the centre and heart of the garden. Consciously or unconsciously, they preserved the symbolism of the gardens of the ancient East. Wherein "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters" was the source of all plant life. In a line in *Macbeth* the fountain symbolizes the heart :—

"The spring, the heart, the fountain of your blood
Is stopped, the very source of it is stopt."¹

Shakespeare's phrase "silver fountains"—

"Roses have thorns and silver fountains mud"²

is suggestive of Sir Philip Sidney's charming description of a garden pool "whose shaking crystal was a perfect mirror to all the other beauties". Shakespeare twice uses the imagery of a "troubled fountain". Achilles says to Thersites :—

"My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirred;
And I myself see not the bottom of it."³

Again in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine says to Bianca :—

"A woman moved is like a fountain troubled."⁴

Othello uses the simile of a fountain with telling force :—

"But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life,—
The fountain from the which my current runs,
Or else dries up, to be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in!"⁵

¹ *Macbeth*. Act ii, Scene 3.

² Sonnet XXXV.

³ *Troilus and Cressida*. Act iii, Scene 3.

⁴ *The Taming of the Shrew*. Act v, Scene 2.

⁵ *Othello*. Act iv, Scene 2.

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Again in *Lucrece* :—

“Mud not the fountain that gave life to thee.”

and—

“Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows’ nests,
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud?”

It is difficult for us to visualize Shakespeare’s “princess’s pavilions”, “summer bowers”, “pleached bowers”, and “summer houses”, and it is still more difficult to imagine what our ancestors in Elizabethan and Stuart times would think of the absurd little erections we call “summer houses”. Garden houses in the sixteenth and seventeenth century sense of the phrase are now exceedingly rare and only to be seen in a few notable gardens. But in Tudor times they were so fashionable that Hall, the chronicler, severely condemned these “summer houses with Towers, Turrets, and chimney pots”. Citizens, he stated, squandered their money on them instead of building hospitals and almshouses. As in Biblical times, summer houses were frequently used for great banquets and consequently were sometimes called banqueting houses. Bacon, it will be remembered, described “a fine banqueting house with some chimneys neatly cast” as the crowning feature of the “fair mount” in the centre of his ideal garden.

In royal gardens and those belonging to the wealthier nobles summer pavilions were chiefly for the use of the ladies of the household, places where in summer they sat and sewed and diverted themselves with music. These pavilions were as fashionable in Tudor as in medieval times. Sometimes these pavilions were not permanent

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structures but ornate tents. The "Princess's pavilion" in *Love's Labour's Lost* was a tent :—

King.

"Fair sir, God save you ! Where's the princess ?"

Boyet.

"Gone to her tent. Please it your majesty
Command me to any service to her thither." ¹

It was before the princess's pavilion that the Princess and her ladies merrily discussed and masked themselves before their lovers joined them.¹ To a pavilion of this type Edmund Mortimer referred—

"Thy tongue
Makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penn'd
Sung by a fair queen in a summer's bower
With ravishing division, to her lute." ²

In the same play *Hotspur*, comparing a humble life with one of splendour, says :—

" I had rather live
With cheese and garlic in a windmill, far,
Than feed on cates and have him talk to me
In any summer house in Christendom." ³

"Pleached bowers" were far less pretentious erections, and Parkinson in his *Paradisus* mentions jasmines and honeysuckles as suitable plants "to set by arbours and banquetting houses that are open before and above to help to cover them and to give both sight, smell, and delight". It was in such a pleached bower, which Ursula later called "the woodbine coverture",⁴ that Beatrice overheard Hero and Ursula discussing herself and Benedick :—

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act v, Scene 2.

² *King Henry the Fourth*. Part i, Act iii, Scene 1.

³ *King Henry the Fourth*, Part i, Act iii, Scene 1.

⁴ *Much Ado about Nothing*. Act iii, Scene 1.

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Hero.

“Whisper in her ear, and tell her, I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse
Is all of her ; say that thou overheard'st us ;
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter.”¹

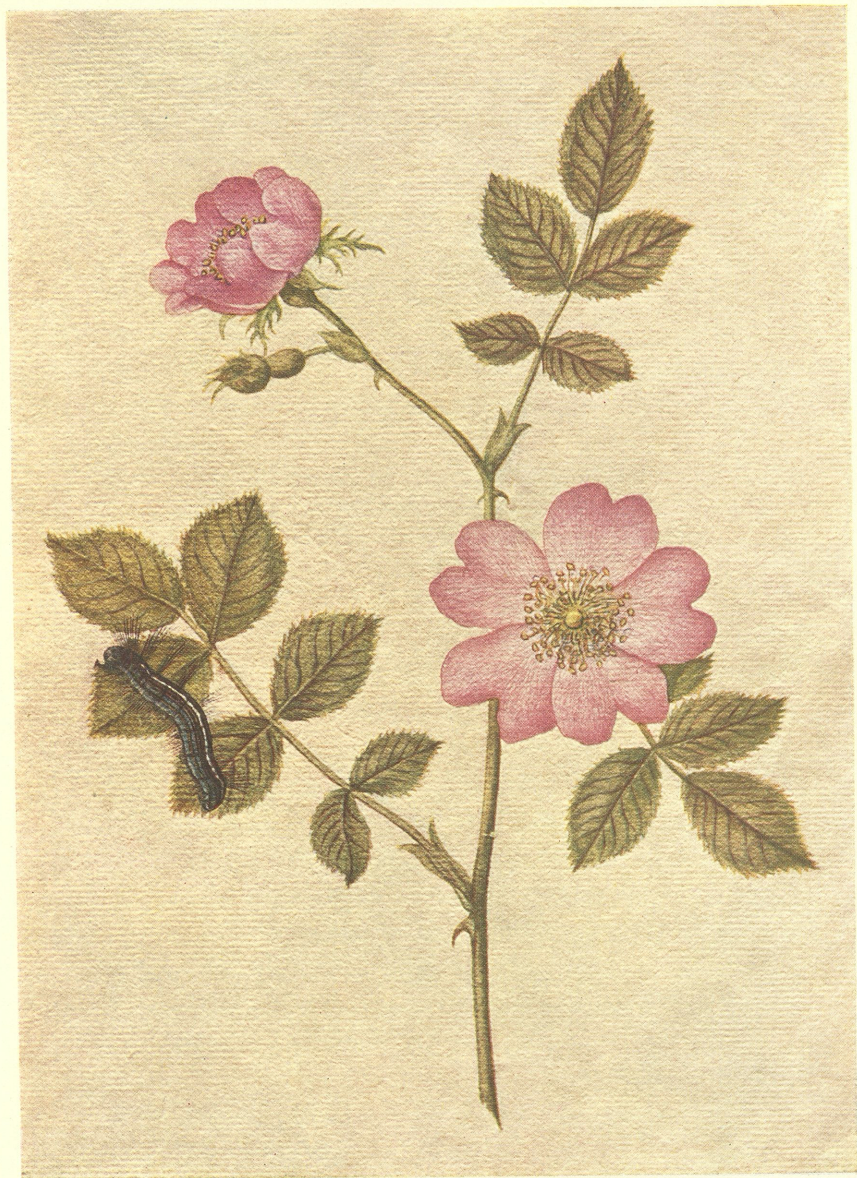
Mazes were of two kinds—hedge mazes and dwarf shrub mazes. It is to the former kind that Shakespeare refers (in *Lucrece*)—

“Or one encompass with a winding maze
That cannot tread the way out readily.”

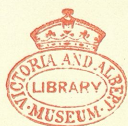
Walks varied greatly in character—open walks, sanded, or turfed, or planted with camomile or sweet smelling herbs such as Bacon suggests. Close walks between hedges of sweet briar or whitethorn “enlaced together” to quote Parkinson “and roses of one or two or more sorts placed here and there among them”. Walks made along enclosing walls with fragrant plants such as rosemary, jasmine, and musk roses trained to form an arch overhead and in long walks apertures made so that, to quote Thomas Hyll, “the owner and his friends might the more fully view and have delight of the whole beautie of the garden”. Pleached alleys where the ladies of the household could walk in the shade in the heat of the summer. Shakespeare mentions various walks. The thick pleached alley² where Don Pedro and Claudio walked was probably the type described by Bacon “a covert alley . . . about twelve foot in height by which you may go in shade into the garden”. In these shady alleys the trees (usually limes, willows, sycamores,

¹ *Much Ado about Nothing.* Act iii, Scene 1.

² *Much Ado about Nothing.* Act i, Scene 2.



DOG ROSE AND CATERPILLAR
by
JACQUES le MOYNE de MORGUES



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or whitethorn) were pleached to meet in an arch overhead. The "alley" where Hero and Ursula plotted may have been a similar walk :—

Hero.

"Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come
As we do trace this alley up and down
Our talk must only be of Benedick." ¹

It was in a close walk in the Duke of York's garden that the Duke asked Salisbury and Warwick to discuss with him his title to the crown of England :—

Duke of York.

"Now my good Lords of Salisbury and Warwick,
Our simple supper ended, give me leave
In this close walk, to satisfy myself
In craving your opinion of my title,
Which is infallible, to England's crown." ²

Bowling greens were as important features of gardens in Shakespeare's day and earlier times as lawn tennis courts are to-day. Dr. Andrew Bordell, in his *Boke for to lerne a man to be wyse in buylding of his house* (circa 1500) mentions dovecots, a pair of butts for archery, and a bowling alley as "necessary and pleasant" features of a garden. There are various references to bowls in the plays, and it is interesting to recall that in those days the game was played by ladies as well as by men. In the scene in the Duke of York's garden in *King Richard the Second*, one of the ladies in waiting suggests a game of bowls to distract the Queen from her anxiety :—

Queen.

"What sport shall we devise here in this garden,
To drive away the heavy thought of care?"

¹ *Much Ado about Nothing.* Act iii, Scene 7.

² *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene 2.

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First Lady.

"Madam, we'll play at bowls."

Queen.

"'Twill make me think the world is full of rubs,
And that my fortune runs against the bias." ¹

Hamlet refers to the game :—

"To die,—to sleep,—

To sleep ! perchance to dream : ay, there's the rub ² ;

Again in *Coriolanus* :—

Menenius Agrippa.

"Nay, sometimes
Like to a bowl upon a subtle ground,
I have tumbled past the throw." ³

Doves in Shakespeare's time were kept for food more than ornament. Until the introduction of swedes and turnips as food for cattle in the early eighteenth century, pigeons were almost the only fresh meat obtainable through the winter. For, owing to lack of fodder, cattle, except a few kept for stock-raising, were slaughtered in December. Hence the ownership of dovecotes was one of the most valued of feudal rights. Samuel Hartlib, writing during the middle years of the seventeenth century, estimated that there were 26,000 dovecotes in England and the average dovecote held at least 500 pairs of birds. The old dovecotes that remain are now amongst the most picturesque buildings in the country, but in past centuries they must have been regarded with scant favour by the humble folk whose crops they pillaged. Amongst Shakespeare's references to doves and dovecotes the following may be cited :—

¹ *King Richard the Second.* Act ii, Scene 4.

² *Hamlet.* Act iii, Scene i.

³ *Coriolanus.* Act v, Scene 2.

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"More white and red than doves and roses are."

Venus and Adonis.

"Fair is my love, but not so fair as fickle;
Mild as a dove, but neither true nor trusty."

The Passionate Pilgrim.

"The dove sleeps fast that this night-owl will catch."

The Rape of Lucrece.

Coriolanus.

"Boy! false hound!

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli."

Coriolanus. Act v, Scene 6.

"Thus weary of the world, away she hies
And yokes her silver doves, by whose swift aid
Their mistress mounted, through the empty skies
In her light chariot quickly is convey'd."

Venus and Adonis.

Juliet.

"Love's heralds should be thoughts
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams
Driving back shadows over louring hills:
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings."

Romeo and Juliet. Act ii, Scene 4.

The most fashionable living ornaments of gardens in those days were peacocks, but Shakespeare refers only once to this bird:—

Joan la Pucelle.

"And like a peacock sweep along his tail
We'll pull his plumes and take away his train."¹

Peacocks were kept not only for their decorative value but for food and were usually housed over the fowl house.

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part i, Act iii, Scene 3.

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To quote Richard Surfleet, "The peacocke is a bird of more beautiful feathers than any other that is . . . he is goodly to behold, verie good to eat, and serveth as a watch in the inner court ; for that hee spying strangers he fayleth not to crie out and to advertise them of the house . . . we are content to keepe them in some roome over the hennes even in the highest part of the henne house for they love to roost on high and in an open ayre, sitting verie often for that cause upon trees." ¹

The references to butterflies are curiously few. They do not seem to have appealed to Shakespeare nor can anything he wrote about them be compared to the loveliest of all butterfly poems—Spenser's *Muoipotmos*. The following references may be cited :—

Titania.

"And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moon beams from his sleeping eyes.

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act iii, Scene 1.

King Lear.

"No, no, no, no ! Come, let's away to prison
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage.
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness ; so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies."

King Lear. Act v, Scene 2.

Valeria.

"I saw him run after a gilded butterfly ; and when he caught it, he let it go again ; and after it again."

Coriolanus. Act i, Scene 3.

¹ Richard Surfleet. *The Countrie Farme.* 1600.

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Menenius Agrippa.

"There is differency between a grub and a butterfly, yet your butterfly was a grub. This Marcius is grown from man to dragon : he has wings, he's more than a creeping thing."

Ibid. Act v, Scene 4.

Cominius.

"He is their god : he leads them like a thing
Made by some other deity than nature,
That shapes man better ; and they follow him
Against us brats, with no less confidence
Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,
Or butchers killing flies."

Ibid. Act iv, Scene 6.

Orchards, as in medieval times, were pleasure gardens laid out on formal lines, adorned with fountains, arbours, mounts, etc., and orchards belonging to wealthy folk were enclosed with brick walls. Even in the latter half of the seventeenth century it was customary to enclose an orchard with a wall. On the frontispiece of Ralph Austin's *Treatise of Fruit Trees* (1653) an orchard is depicted with formal walks and surrounded with a high brick wall and on one side an ornate entrance gateway. Juliet, referring to the difficulties Romeo must have encountered says : "The orchard walls are high and hard to climb ;" ¹ Gates were kept securely closed. In *King Henry the Fourth* the Porter says to Lord Bardolph :—

"His lordship is walkt forth into the orchard :
Please it your honour, knock but at the gate,
And he himself will answer." ²

Shakespeare twice mentions arbours in orchards. Shallow in *King Henry the Fourth* says to Falstaff :—

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene 1.

² *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act i, Scene 1.

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"Nay, you shall see my orchard, where, in an arbour, we will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting, with a dish of caraways, and so forth :—" ¹

Benedick in the orchard ejaculates :—

"Ha, the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour." ²

The vineyard was an important adjunct of the garden and usually led either from the garden or the orchard. Isabella, in *Measure for Measure* says :—

"He hath a garden circummured with brick,
Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd ;
And to that vineyard is a planched gate,
That makes his opening with this bigger key :
This other doth command a little door
Which from the vineyard to the garden leads ;
There have I made my promise,
Upon the heavy middle of the night
To call upon him." ³

In Elizabethan times vines as in ancient Egypt were trained to poles and rafters in ornamental fashion. Shakespeare refers to this method of growing them in the brief phrase "thy pole-clipt vineyard" :—

Iris.

"Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats and pease ;
.
.
.
.
.
.
thy pole-clipt vineyard ;
And thy sea-marge, sterile and rocky hard,
Where thou thyself dost air ;—the queen o' the sky,
Whose watery arch and messenger am I,
Bids thee leave these." ⁴

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act v, Scene 3.

² *Much Ado about Nothing.* Act ii, Scene 3.

³ *Measure for Measure.* Act iv, Scene 1.

⁴ *The Tempest.* Act iv, Scene 1.

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Gerard in his *Herball* (1597) describes this method of growing vines—"The vine is held up with poles and frames of wood and by that means is spreadeth all about and climbeth aloft; it joyneth itselfe unto trees, or whatsoever standeth next unto it."

Like Spenser and Milton, Shakespeare refers to the Italian custom of training vines up elms :—

Adriana.

"Thou art an elm, my husband—I a vine
Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state
Makes me with thy strength to communicate :
If aught possess thee from me, it is dross
Usurping ivy, brier, or idle moss ;
Who, all for want of pruning, with intrusion
Infect thy sap." ¹

¹ *The Comedy of Errors.* Act ii, Scene 2.

The following are other references to vines and vineyards :—

ARVIRAGUS.

"And let the stinking elder, grief, untwine
His perishing root with the increasing vine."

Cymbeline. Act iv, Scene 2.

LEAR.

"... Now our joy,
"Although our last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest."

King Lear. Act i, Scene 1.

TIMON.

"Dry up thy marrows, vines and plough-torn leas."

Timon of Athens. Act iv, Scene 3.

"Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plumpy Bacchus, with pink eyne,
In thy fats our cares be drowned,
With thy grapes our hairs be crowned."

Antony and Cleopatra. Act ii, Scene 7.

"For one sweet grape, who will the vine destroy?"

Rape of Lucrece.

CONSTABLE OF FRANCE

"... Let us quit all
"And give our vineyards to a barbarous people."

King Henry the Fifth. Act iii, Scene 5.

BURGUNDY.

"Her vine, the merry cheerer of the heart,
Unpruned dies. . . ."

"Our vineyards, fallows, meads, and hedges
Defective in their natures, grow to wildness."

Ibid., Act v, Scene 2.

[Continued on p. 88.]

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Even in Elizabeth's reign, however, vineyards had suffered a decline. In Holinshed's *Chronicles* emphasis is frequently laid on the number of vineyards in England, but Parkinson, writing in 1629, comments on their decline, ascribing the cause to the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the change in the climate. "I think it a fruitlesse labour," he concludes, "for any man to strive in these daies to make a good vineyard in England in regard not only of the want of knowledge . . . but most chiefly and above all others what our years in these times do not fall out to be so kindly and hot to ripen the grapes, to make anie good wine as formerly they have done". The author of *The Garden of Eden* (1653) ascribes the decline to "the extreme negligence and blockish ignorance of our people, who do most unjustly lay their wrongful accusations upon the soil, whereas the greatest if not the whole fault may justly be removed upon themselves".

Garden architecture tends to lag at least a century behind

Note continued from p. 87.]

- EDMUND MORTIMER. ". . . Pithless arms, like to a wither'd vine
That droops his sapless branches to the ground."
King Henry the Sixth. Part i, Act ii, Scene 5.
- CRANMER. "In her days every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants; and sing,
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours;"
King Henry the Eighth. Act v, Scene 4.
- CRANMER. "Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,
That were the servants to this chosen infant,
Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him.
Ibid.
- RICHMOND. ". . . The usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines."
Richard the Third. Act v, Scene 2.
- GONZALO. "Bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none."
The Tempest. Act ii, Scene 1.
- CERES. "Vines with clustering bunches growing;
Plants with goodly burden bowing."
Ibid., Act iv, Scene 1.





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the domestic architecture of its day. In the early years of the twentieth century there were numerous gardens in these islands which were substantially the same as they had been when Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The reason is not far to seek. Houses can be built comparatively quickly, but it takes many years to make a garden and people are loth to destroy what cannot be replaced perhaps in a life-time. Further, where expense is a consideration, money is devoted first to domestic comfort and only what can be spared to the pleasures of a garden. In Elizabethan England gardens that had retained their medieval character were probably common and Shakespeare was doubtless familiar with pleasaunces of the type he visualized in the garden scenes in *King Richard the Second* and the three plays of *King Henry the Sixth*.

The Duke of York's garden and Gloucester's garden were probably stately enclosures, suggestive, as were the majority of medieval gardens, of the town rather than the country. Nowadays there is a well-nigh universal craving for the country, but it was not so in medieval times. The town was the symbol of protection and security, and consciously or unconsciously wealthy folk reproduced in their pleasaunces features suggestive of the much-valued security of a town. The numerous high hedges were clipped to resemble walls and turrets and the narrow alleys, fountains, and flower beds safely enclosed with diminutive hedges, trellis work or rails, all served to make these enclosures reminiscent of a miniature town. In country gardens flowery meads were delightful features. These were imitations of the natural meadow and planted with various flowers—primroses, periwinkles, irises, columbines,

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pinks. Chaucer's description of a flowery mead in his version of the *Romaunt of the Rose* is familiar to all. These flowery meads frequently adjoined the summer pavilions used chiefly by the ladies of the household and probably the scene—"Before the Princess's pavilion" in *Love's Labour's Lost* took place in a mead of this kind. In later days the flowers were eliminated, and the mead became the earliest type of lawn. Even in Shakespeare's time lawns were not commonly planted with flowers. They were frequently known as sporting green plots and still reserved chiefly for the use of the ladies of the household. Gervase Markham in his *Way to get wealth* (1613) gives full directions for the making of such a lawn—"the sporting green plot for ladies and gentlewomen to recreate their spirits in, or a place whereinto they may withdraw themselves if they would be solitary and out of sight." Lawns in those days were as commonly made of camomile as of grass. It was of camomile used for this purpose that Falstaff said, "the more it is trodden on the faster it grows."

Iden's garden, the garden of a Kentish gentleman, would have been far less stately than the gardens belonging to the Dukes of York and Gloucester. It is impossible to look at certain houses in Kent, such as Synyards and Wardes in the village of Otham, The Old Hall (Sundridge), Kite House (Monks Horton), Stoneacre (Sittingbourne), Leak Farm (Egerton) without visualizing the type of garden Iden owned. A homely garden and like Kentish gardens to-day doubtless it was a pleasant mixture of old-fashioned flowers and an abundance of fruit. A small trim pleasure garden, and beyond a kitchen garden with

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roses in profusion, pot herbs and physic herbs, and beyond again a large orchard.

Italian gardens Shakespeare must have known, at least from hearsay, for a visit to Italy was considered part of the education of young men of position. In Elizabeth's reign the most famous Italian gardens were the Boboli garden, made for Eleanora de' Medici in 1549 by Il Tribolo and Buontalente, the older gardens made in 1417 by Cosimo de' Medici from the designs of Michelozzo Michelozzi, Poggio di Cajano, where Lorenzo de' Medici had established his famous menagerie and aviary and his villa at Careggio, noted for its collection of rare plants, the gardens of the Villa Madama designed by Raphael and San Gallo for Margaret, Duchess of Parma, and the Vatican gardens designed by Bramante. Falda's *di Giardini di Roma* is a valuable record of gardens familiar to Englishmen in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and suggests the types of pleasancesses Shakespeare may have visualized for the garden scenes of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Othello*.

One garden must have been of a type unfamiliar to Shakespeare—the garden of Cymbeline's palace, where the opening scene of *Cymbeline* takes place. It must be remembered that Shakespeare, in common with his contemporaries, accepted without question the statements of the ancient British historians, Gildas and Nennius. It was only in the nineteenth century that German scholars (with insufficient proof) denied their veracity and made the world in general believe that our British ancestors were savages. Modern research has gone far to prove that so far

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from this being the case they were a highly cultured people, remarkable for their seats of learning, their astronomical knowledge, their just laws, their patriotism, and humanity. What manner of garden had Cymbeline? None can say for certain. But I cannot help thinking that like the most famous gardens in these islands to-day it was suggestive of a home rather than a palace. All that we can learn of foreign gardens from the earliest times and with few exceptions, goes to prove that they were frames or settings for social events rather than gardens in our sense of the word. To our race, gardens are a delight in themselves and the plants they contain of supreme interest. Is this a new characteristic of our race? I think not. All our vast store of garden literature through the centuries (I suppose more gardening books have been printed in the English language than in any other) goes to prove that we have never regarded our gardens as settings. They have always been integral parts of our homes and sources of endless pleasure. We enjoy working in our gardens, but the average foreigner does not. In what foreign literature are there passages to compare with William Lawson's delightful chapter on the *Joys of a Garden* and Ralph Austen's on the *Joys of an Orchard*?

We are essentially a conservative race and our British ancestors probably took as great delight in their gardens as we do now. Recent discoveries in the Cornish village of Chysauster show the enclosures that in the days of the ancient Britons must have been gardens belonging to humble folk. It is well known that broad beans were grown in those days, but apart from these, esteemed for centuries by cottagers, our British ancestors probably

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grew few vegetables with the possible exception of leeks. The dates of the introduction of some of the most beautiful flowers we grow to-day is unknown. Many plants have been introduced and lost, re-introduced and lost again several times. Cymbeline's garden may well have contained Madonna lilies, cabbage roses, other old roses long since lost, jasmine (*Jasminum officinalis*), irises, pinks, marigolds, and periwinkles. It is well-nigh certain he grew roses and probably in abundance. The white rose of England, *R. alba* and its red variety, the red rose of England, are of immemorial antiquity and have always been associated with our island. Pliny, writing in the first century, said "The isle of Albion is so called from its white cliffs washed by the sea, or from the white roses with which it abounds". The researches of modern scholars have shown that means of communication in those far-off times was better than we are wont to imagine, and it is unlikely that the Druids, who devoted so much time to the study of plants, would not have availed themselves of an opportunity of obtaining new plants from the continent. And what of the legend of the fourth century saint, St. Maurille, who fled from Angers to this country and became a gardener to a British prince? Tradition, as Disraeli once emphasized, can neither be made nor destroyed and the tale of St. Maurille working as a gardener for a British prince is one of the most picturesque in the history of gardening. It is certainly the oldest garden tradition in connection with these islands and why should it not be true? We are a race of incorrigible gardeners and it is at least likely that in common with our other well-known characteristics we have inherited this from our ancestors of those far-off days.

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There is one reference to a type of garden older even than that of Cymbeline's palace, namely, the far-famed Adonis gardens of the ancient East :—

Charles.

“Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens,
That one day bloom'd, and fruitful were the next.”¹

In *Pericles* there is a reference to the Gardens of the Hesperides :—

Antiochus.

“Before thee stands this fair Hesperides,
With golden fruit, but dangerous to be toucht ;
For death-like dragons here affright thee hard :”²

Only one gardener figures in the plays and it seems curious that Shakespeare makes no reference to women gardeners. For in his day women gardeners were commonly employed even in royal gardens and chiefly for weeding and watering. The names of the women gardeners employed by Henry VIII at Hampton Court have all been preserved. The gardener in *King Richard the Second* is typical—a kindly, forbearing man as are most folk who live close to the soil. In spite of the distrougt Queen's harsh words to him he had naught save pity for her :—

Queen.

“Gardener, for telling me this news of woe,
Pray God the plants thou graft'st may never grow.”

(*Exeunt Queen and Ladies.*)

Gardener.

“Poor Queen ! so that thy state might be no worse,
I would my skill were subject to thy curse.
Here did she fall a tear ; here, in this place,
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace :

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part i, Act i, Scene 6.

² *Pericles.* Act i, Scene 1.

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Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen.

In the remembrance of a weeping queen.”¹

Gardening terms and imagery drawn from a garden came as naturally to Shakespeare as though he had been a gardener. In *King Henry the Fifth* the Duke of Burgundy spoke of France as “this best garden of the world”.²

Again in the epilogue to the same play, the realms of England and France, the latter, joined to this country by the conquests of Henry V, are described as “the world’s best garden”—

“This star of England; fortune made his sword;
By which the world’s best garden he achieved,
And of it left his son imperial lord.”

In the plays prince and peasant alike use imagery drawn from a garden and it is noteworthy that its use is most frequent in moments of stress or great emotion. To cite but a very few instances: Othello torn between his love for Desdemona and his jealousy, apostrophizes her:—

“ O thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair, and smell’st so sweet,
That the sense aches at thee,—would thou had’st ne’er
been born!”³

Wolsey, on the eve of his fall, ejaculates:—

“Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness, is a-ripening—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.”⁴

¹ *King Richard the Second.* Act iii, Scene 4.

² *King Henry the Fifth.* Act v, Scene 2.

³ *Othello.* Act iv, Scene 2.

⁴ *King Henry the Eighth.* Act iii, Scene 2.

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Queen Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV, cries to Richard III in her grief over the death of the two young princes :—

“ The parents live, whose children thou hast butcher’d,
Old withered plants, to wail it with their age.” ¹

Hamlet in his first soliloquy compares the world to an unweeded garden :—

“ O God ! God !
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world !
Fie on’t ! O fie ! ’tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.” ²

The Dauphin before the battle of Agincourt exclaims :—

“ O Dieu vivant ! shall a few sprays of us,
The emptying of our fathers’ luxury,
Our scions, put in wild and savage stock,
Spirt up so suddenly into the clouds,
And overlook their grafters ? ” ³

Mortimer, when dying, compared himself to—

“ a withered vine
That droops his sapless branches to the ground : ” ⁴

and later addressed Richard Plantagenet as—

“ Sweet stem from York’s great stock.” ⁵

Constance, the mother of Prince Arthur, distraught with grief over his murder, says :—

“ And, father cardinal, I have heard you say
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven :
If that be true, I shall see my boy again ;
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¹ *King Richard the Third.* Act iv, Scene 4.

² *Hamlet.* Act i, Scene 2.

³ *King Henry the Fifth.* Act iii, Scene 5.

⁴ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 5.

⁵ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 5.

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But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,
And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
· · · · · and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
I shall not know him ; therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.”¹

The simile of dew occurs in several lovely passages notably in *Lucrece* :—

“As in the morning’s silver-melting dew
Against the golden splendour of the sun !”

To morning dew Shakespeare compared youth :—

“And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then.” ²

And in two other passages dew figures as a symbol of blessing :—

Belisarius.

“The benediction of these covering heavens
Fall on their heads like dew! for they are worthy
To inlay heaven with stars.”³

In *Coriolanus*—"dews of flattery"—

Aufidius.

“ I raised him, and I pawn’d
Mine honour for his truth : who being so heighten’d,
He water’d his new plants with dews of flattery.” ⁴

The following are instances of imagery drawn from grafting and pruning (in Shakespeare's time, as in medieval days, reckoned the most important of gardening opera-

¹ *King John*. Act iii, Scene 4.

² *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Cymbeline*. Act v, Scene 5.

⁴ *Coriolanus*. Act v, Scene 6.

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tions) gardening in general, weeds, garden pests, and
“untimely frosts”—

Earl of Warwick.

“It fails not yet, but flourishes in thee,
And in thy sons, fair slips of such a stock.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 2.

Duke of Suffolk.

“ And noble stock
Was graft with crab-tree slip ; whose fruit thou art,”

Ibid., Act iii, Scene 2.

Duke of Buckingham.

“This noble isle doth want her proper limbs ;

Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants,”

King Richard the Third. Act iii, Scene 7.

French King.

“ This is a stem
Of that victorious stock.”

King Henry the Fifth. Act ii, Scene 4.

Menenius.

“We have some old crab-trees here at home that will not
Be grafted to your relish.”

Coriolanus. Act ii, Scene 1.

Adam.

“Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly : let me go with you ;
I'll do the service of a younger man
In all your business and necessities.”

Orlando.

“O good old man, how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world.

But, poor old man, thou prunest a rotten tree,
That cannot so much as a blossom yield
In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry.”

As You Like It. Act ii, Scene 3.

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Dionysa.

"O my distressed lord, even such our griefs are ;
Here they're but felt, and seen with mischief's eyes,
But, like to groves, being topt, they higher rise."

Pericles. Act i, Scene 4.

Constable of France.

"And you shall find his vanities forespent
Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus,
Covering discretion with a coat of folly ;
As gardeners do with ordure hide those roots
That shall first spring and be most delicate."

King Henry the Fifth. Act ii, Scene 4.

Tullus Aufidius.

" O Marcius, Marcius !
Each word thou hast spoke has weeded from my heart
A root of ancient envy."

Coriolanus. Act iv, Scene 5.

Duncan.

" Welcome hither :
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing."

Macbeth. Act i, Scene 4.

Duke of York.

"Grandam, one night, as we did sit at supper,
My uncle Rivers talk't how I did grow
More than my brother, ' Ay,' quoth my uncle Glo'ster,
' Small herbs have grace, great weeds do grow apace ;'
And since, methinks, I would not grow so fast,
Because sweet flowers are slow, and weeds make haste."

King Richard the Third. Act ii, Scene 4.

Duke of York.

" O, my lord,
You said that idle weeds are fast in growth :
The Prince, my brother, hath outgrown me far."

King Richard the Third. Act iii, Scene 1.

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Queen Margaret.

"Now 'tis the spring, and weeds are shallow-rooted ;
Suffer them now, and they'll o'ergrow the garden,
And choke the herbs for want of husbandry."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 1.

Lennox.

" Or so much as it needs
To dew the sovereign flower, and drown the weeds.
Make we our march towards Birnam."

Macbeth. Act v, Scene 1.

Jacques.

" It is my only suit ;
Provided that you weed your better judgements
Of all opinion that grows rank in them,
That I am wise."

As You Like It. Act ii, Scene 7.

Archbishop of York.

" For full well he knows
He cannot so precisely weed this land
As his misdoubts present occasion :
His foes are so enrooted with his friends,
That, plucking to unfix an enemy,
He doth unfasten so and shake a friend."

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 1.

King Henry.

"Most subject is the fattest soil to weeds."

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 4.

"They bid thee crop a weed, thou pluck'st a flower."

Venus and Adonis.

Mark Antony.

" O, then we bring forth weeds
When our quick minds lie still ; and our ills told us
Is as our earing."

Antony and Cleopatra. Act i, Scene 2.

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Hamlet.

"And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker."

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene 4.

"Then, churls, their thoughts, although their eyes were kind,
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds ;
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,
The soil is this,—that thou dost common grow."

Sonnet LXIX.

"When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now
Will be a totter'd weed, of small worth held."

Sonnet II.

Lysimachus.

" O sir, a courtesy
Which, if we should deny, the most just gods
For every graff would send a caterpillar
And so inflict our province."

Pericles. Act v, Scene 1.

Messenger.

"They call false caterpillars, and intend their death."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 4.

Duke of York.

" For I had hope of France
As firmly as I hope for fertile England.
Thus are my blossoms blasted in the bud,
And caterpillars eat my leaves away."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 1.

Henry Bolinbroke.

"(By) Bushy, Bagot, and their complices,
The caterpillars of the commonwealth,
Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away."

King Richard the Second. Act ii, Scene 3.

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Prospero.

" This gallant which thou see'st
was in the wrack : and, but he's something stain'd
With grief, that's beauty's canker, thou mightst call him
A goodly person."

Tempest. Act i, Scene 2.

Don John.

" I had rather be a canker in the hedge than
A rose in his grace."

Much Ado About Nothing. Act i, Scene 3.

Laertes.

" The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be unclosed."

Hamlet. Act i, Scene 3.

Constance.

" But now will canker-sorrow eat my bud."

King John. Act iii, Scene 4.

Pointz.

" O, that this good blossom could be kept from cankers !"

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 2.

Titania.

" Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds."

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act ii, Scene 2.

" But he, his own affections' counsellor,
Is to himself,—I will not say how true,—
But to himself so secret and so close,
So far from sounding and discovery,
As is the bud bit with an envious worm,
Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun."

Romeo and Juliet. Act i, Scene 1.

Hermia.

" O me !—you juggler ! you canker blossom !"

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act. iii, Scene 2.

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“ This canker that eats up Love’s tender spring.”

Venus and Adonis.

“ For canker vice the sweetest buds doth love.”

Sonnet LXX.

“ How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame,
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name.”

Sonnet XCV.

“ Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring,
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers.”

Lucrece.

The King.

“ Berowne is like an envious sneeping frost,
That bites the first-born infants of the spring.”

Love’s Labour’s Lost. Act i, Scene 1.

“ No men inveigh against the withered flower
But chide rough winter that the flower hath killed !
Not that devoured, but that which doth devour,
Is worthy blame.”

Lucrece.

Imogen.

“ Or ere I could
Give him that parting kiss which I had set
Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father,
And, like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
Shakes all our buds from growing.”

Cymbeline. Act i, Scene 3.

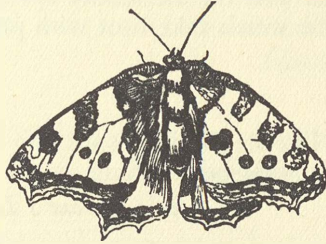
Finally, the modern gardener’s complaint that our seasons are altering is not new. It was so in Titania’s day !

“ The seasons alter : hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;

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And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set : the spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries ; and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which." ¹

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.



CHAPTER IV

GARDEN FLOWERS AND FRUITS

When William Langham, one of the great herbalists of Shakespeare's time and author of *The Garden of Health*, (1597) wrote of roses, he set forth their greatest virtue thus—"Roses do comfort the heart." It is, I think, impossible to look at the restful old-fashioned beauty of the roses of Shakespeare's day, and to smell their fragrance, without thinking of Langham's pleasant words, for these roses do indeed comfort the heart as no modern roses can.

Shakespeare mentions roses nearly a hundred times, and specifically the musk rose, the white rose of the House of York, the red rose of the House of Lancaster, the Provençal rose, the damask rose, the York and Lancaster rose, the rose of May, the dog rose and eglantine (sweet briar).

The musk rose *R. moschata*, adorned Titania's bower:—

"With sweet musk roses and with eglantine;
There sleeps Titania, sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight."¹

Evidently it was her favourite rose, for did she not specially enjoin her attendant fairies "to kill cankers in the Musk Rosebuds". Why did Shakespeare choose the musk rose to adorn Titania's bower? Probably for the same reason that he chose sweet briar. For in his day these were the only roses that scented the air around them, most roses being "fast of their smells". Bacon extolled the musk rose for scenting the air "where it comes and goes like the warbling of music". Shakespeare's lines also suggest the music of their fragrance. It is strange indeed that this lovely but somewhat tender climbing rose is so seldom

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

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grown now, not only for its musky fragrance but the beauty of its immense clusters of blooms. The type has white flowers, but there are several varieties, one with pale yellow flowers and another with pink. In Victorian times the varieties were more numerous, the most sweetly scented being *Princesse de Nassau*.

Musk roses vary considerably in fragrance, and like sweet briar the scent is stronger in a still, moist atmosphere. Bacon, Shakespeare, and Keats all extol this rose, but take considerable poetic licence in regard to its time of flowering. Bacon described it as July-flowering: in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, it was in bloom that night; and Keats wrote of it as "mid-May's eldest child". Musk roses are late summer-flowering even in mild parts.

According to most authorities the origin of the white rose of England—*R. alba*—is lost in the mists of antiquity. The variety Maiden's Blush is the "Incarnation Rose", described by Parkinson in his *Paradisus* and probably the Incarnation Rose mentioned by Turner in his *Herbal*. *R. alba* was the rose of the House of York and it figures conspicuously in the scene of the quarrel between Plantagenet and Somerset in the Temple Gardens. *R. alba* is seldom grown now, but it was formerly a favourite and even the well-known Maiden's Blush, formerly grown in nearly every cottage garden, is far from commonly seen now.

This rose is conspicuous not only for its beauty and vigorous growth, but for its peculiarly exquisite fragrance and the curious "blush" which suffuses the petals. It is decidedly not pale pink. The old writers were very accurate in their description of colours, and Parkinson describes

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Maiden's Blush as "of a bright pale murrey colour"—i.e. a very pale mulberry. Redouté, the famous French painter, styled this rose "le grand Maiden's Blush des Anglais".

The red rose of England is a variety of *R. alba*, and Parkinson in his *Paradisus* describes these roses as "the most ancient and knowne Roses to our Countrey, whether naturall or no I know not, but assumed by our precedent Kings of all others to bee cognizances of their dignitie, the white rose and the red". There is a very ancient tradition, mentioned by Pliny, that Albion was so called either from "its white cliffs washed by the sea or from the white roses with which it abounds". Shakespeare frequently refers to red roses and in many cases he may have had the red rose of England in his mind, notably in the touching description of the little princes murdered in the Tower:—

"girdling one another
Within their alabaster innocent arms ;
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
Which in their summer beauty kist each other." ¹

Shakespeare does not mention the York and Lancaster rose by name, but this is obviously the variegated rose to which he refers several times, notably in Sonnet XCIX:—

"The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair,
A third, nor red nor white, had stol'n of both
And to his robbery had annexed thy breath."

In Sonnet CXXX there is a similar passage:—

"I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks."

¹ *Richard the Third.* Act iv, Scene 3.

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Again, in *As You Like It* :—

Phebe.

“There was a pretty redness in his lip,
A little riper and more lusty red
Than that mixt in his cheek ; ’twas just the difference
Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask.”¹

There are two species of variegated roses, the one a *Gallica versicolor* and the other a *Damask versicolor* rose. The *Gallica versicolor* with striped petals has for centuries been known as *Rosa mundi*, and possibly may be connected with the twelfth century Fair Rosamund, whose name it commemorates. The *Damask versicolor* has an occasional red petal, and according to the leading rosarians this is the true York and Lancaster rose. Of these two variegated roses *Rosa mundi* is indisputably the finest. Its bold colouring and conspicuous golden stamens made it a favourite with the old painters, who frequently depicted it in bowls of mixed flowers.

The red rose of England must not be confused with the red rose of the House of Lancaster, which is quite a different rose. Probably this was *Rosa gallica*, brought back by Thibault le Chansonier from Palestine to Provins in the thirteenth century. It was the rose most commonly used for medicinal purposes throughout the Middle Ages. Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster, son of Henry III of England, became Count of Champagne by marriage and he adopted the badge of the red rose. As his cognizance it figures on his tomb in Westminster Abbey. Even in Victorian times the red rose of Lancaster was commonly grown, and being still used for medicinal purposes it was

¹ *As You Like It*. Act iii, Scene 5.

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commonly known as "The Apothecaries' Rose". Shakespeare mentions the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York at least thirty times. Nearly all the references to these roses are to be found in the scene in the Temple garden.¹ The following are other instances.

Basset.

"This fellow here . . .

Upbraided me about the rose I wear ;
Saying the sanguine colour of the leaves
Did represent my master's blushing cheeks."

King Henry the Sixth. Part i, Act iv, Scene 1.

Vernon.

"Yet know, my lord, I was provoked by him ;
And he first took exceptions at this badge,
Pronouncing that the paleness of this flower
Bewray'd the faintness of my master's heart."

King Henry the Sixth. Part i, Act iv, Scene 1.

King Henry.

"Let me be umpire in this doubtful strife.
I see no reason, if I wear this rose,
(putting on a red rose)
That any one should be suspicious
I more incline to Somerset than York."

King Henry the Sixth. Part i, Act iv, Scene 1.

Duke of York.

"Then will I raise aloft the milk-white rose,
With whose sweet smell the air shall be perfumed ;
And in my standard bear the arms of York
To grapple with the house of Lancaster."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act i, Scene 1.

¹ See page 65.

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Richard.

" . . . I cannot rest
Until the white rose that I wear be dyed
Even in the lukewarm blood of Henry's heart."

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act i, Scene 2.

King Henry.

"The red rose and the white are on his face,
The fatal colours of our striving houses :
The one his purple blood right well resembles
The other his pale cheeks, methinks, presenteth.
Wither one rose, and let the other flourish.
If you contend, a thousand lives must wither."

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act ii, Scene 5.

Earl of Richmond.

"We will unite the white rose and the red.
Smile, heaven, upon this fair conjunction."

King Richard the Third. Act v, Scene 5.

Hamlet's two "Provincial Roses on my razed shoes"¹ refer presumably to Provençal roses and probably to the most famous member of this large family of roses—the old cabbage rose. It is amongst the most ancient of garden roses. Pliny mentioned it and possibly it is also the many-petalled rose mentioned by Homer. In spite of its incomparable scent and beauty this rose is rarely grown now, and indeed it seems to have lost its old vitality. In the early years of the nineteenth century there were about a hundred varieties of Provence roses and a few of them are still obtainable, notably the Rose des Peintres, with incurving petals and raised centre, which figures so largely in van Huysum's and other old Dutch artists' paintings ; also the charming Rose de Meaux, named after the flower-loving

¹ *Hamlet.* Act iii, Scene 2.

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Bishop of Meaux—Dominique Segulier—appointed to the see of Meaux in 1637. Petite de Hollande is another dainty member of the Provence family, but the flowers have not the exquisite fragrance of the Rose de Meaux.

The Damask rose, which figures in Autolycus' song :—

“Gloves as sweet as Damask roses.”¹

cultivated from time immemorial in the East and traditionally introduced into these islands by the Crusaders, is still obtainable but rarely grown now. The variety *trigintipetala* is however extensively grown in the Balkans for attar of roses.

Which was the “Rose of May” to which Laertes compared Ophelia?

“O Rose of May

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia.”²

I think there is very little doubt Laertes referred to the cinnamon rose, noted for its early flowering. In Victorian times this rose, a native of Europe and North Asia, was called the Whitsuntide rose. Gerard, who grew it in his Holborn garden, states that the scent is in its leaves. It is difficult, however, to trace any scent of cinnamon in the leaves, though the flowers have a very faint spice odour.

The only native roses mentioned by Shakespeare are the dog rose and the sweet briar. The dog rose Thisbe perfectly described as “the red rose on triumphant briar”.³ What more “triumphant” than a brave show of dog-roses in a hedge-row? Few leaf scents can compare with that of the eglantine, extolled by Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare. In *Cymbeline* there is a reference to the exquisite

¹ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 5.

³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act iii, Scene 1.

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scent of sweet briar, which, as in the passage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is called eglantine.

Arviragus.

“With fairest flowers
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave : thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face . . .
. no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Outsweetened not thy breath.”¹

In the old rose books, notably Andrews' *Roses* (1828) there are numerous paintings of the varieties of sweet briar now lost to cultivation. The greatest loss of all is surely the double sweet briar, which in Andrews' book is named *R. eglantina multiplex*, a variety Shakespeare probably knew, for Gerard, who grew it, describes it as a rose commonly grown in London gardens.

“We have in our London gardens another sweet briar, having greater leaves and much sweeter, the floures likewise are greater and somewhat doubled exceeding sweet of smell.”

In Shakespeare's day roses were valued not only for their beauty and perfume, but also for their medicinal, culinary, and cosmetic uses. To treat adequately of this subject would require a volume. It is pleasant to visualize a still-room of that period—the busy housewife and her attendants, the stills and the masses of fragrant rose petals.

“But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.”²

¹ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act i, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Roses were used more than any other flowers. The still-room books of the period, notably Sir Hugh Platt's dainty little volume *Delights for Ladies*, are full of recipes for rose water, rose tablets, cakes of roses, syrups of roses, conserve of roses, rose honey, rose ointment, oil of roses, rose drops, and rossoly, rose vinegar, to say nothing of flavouring wines and cakes with rose water. "Cakes of roses" were part of the stock-in-trade of the Apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet* :—

"Remnants of packthread and cakes of roses
Were thinly scatter'd to make up a show." ¹

Countless perfumes were made from roses :—

"The rose looks fair but fairer it we deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly,
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses.
But for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwoo'd and unrespected fade ;
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so ;
Of their sweet deaths are sweeter odours made." ²

Even in James I's reign it was still considered foppish to use a fork and basins of rose water figured at every banquet.

"Let one attend him with a silver basin
Full of Rose water and bestrewed with flowers." ³

Further, they were valued not only for food, medicine, and cosmetics, but also for their effect on the mind—"Dry roses put to the nose to smell do comfort the brayne and the herte and quickeneth the spirit." Shakespeare frequently

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act v, Scene 1.

² Sonnet LIV.

³ *The Taming of the Shrew*. Prologue.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

drew his imagery from roses. In two passages the rose figures as the symbol of one greatly beloved.

Queen.

“But soft, but see, or rather do not see
My fair rose wither ; yet look up, behold,
That you in pity may dissolve to dew,
And wash him fresh again with true-love tears.”¹

Again :—

“To put down Richard, that sweet lovely rose,
And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke ? ”²

And as the symbol of youth three times :—

Mark Antony.

“To him again : tell him he wears the rose
Of youth upon him, from which the world should note
Something particular.”

Antony and Cleopatra. Act iii, Scene 13.

Constance said to her young son, Arthur :—

“Of Nature’s gifts thou mayest with lilies boast
And with the half-blown rose.”

King John. Act iii, Scene 1.

Countess.

“Even so it was with me when I was young.
If we are nature’s, these are ours ; this thorn
Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong.”

All’s Well that Ends Well. Act i, Scene 3.

In another passage the imagery of roses’ thorns figures again :—

“What though the rose have prickles, yet ’tis pluckt.”³

¹ *King Richard the Second.* Act v, Scene 1.

² *King Henry the Fourth.* Part i, Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Venus and Adonis.*

Garden Flowers and Fruits

In several passages the rose symbolizes flawless perfection :—

Ophelia.

“ O what a noble mind is here o’erthrown !

Th’ expectancy and rose of the fair state.”

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene i.

Hamlet.

“ Such an act

. takes off the rose

From the fair forehead of an innocent love

And sets blister there.”

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene 4.

“ From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty’s Rose might never die.”

Sonnet I.

“ Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true ? ”

Sonnet LXVII.

“ For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my Rose, in it thou art my all.”

Sonnet CIX.

In several passages women are compared to roses :—

Duke of Illyria.

For women are as roses, whose fair flower
Being once display’d, doth fall that very hour.

Twelfth Night. Act ii, Scene 4.

Othello.

“ . . . When I have pluck’t the rose
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither : I’ll smell it on the tree.”

Othello. Act v, Scene 2.

Boyet.

“ Blow like sweet roses in this summer air.”

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Princess.

"How blow? how blow? Speak to be understood."

Boyet.

"Fair ladies maskt are roses in their bud.
Dismaskt, their damask sweet commixture shown
Are angels vailing clouds, or roses blown."

Love's Labour's Lost. Act v, Scene 2.

Boult.

"For flesh and blood, sir, white and red, you shall see a
rose, and she were a rose indeed."

Pericles. Act iv, Scene 4.

"Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely pluckt, soon vaded,
Pluckt in the bud and vaded in the spring!"

The Passionate Pilgrim 10.

Diana

"... but when you have our roses,
You barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves
And mock us with our bareness."

All's Well that Ends Well. Act iv, Scene 2.

Cleopatra.

"What, no more ceremony?—See, my women!
Against the blown rose may they stop their nose
That kneel'd unto the buds."

Antony and Cleopatra. Act iii, Scene 13.

NOTE. In various passages "rose" stands for "rose-coloured":—

FRIAR LAURENCE. "The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
To paly ashes; thy eyes' windows fall
Like death when he shuts up the day of life."

Romeo and Juliet. Act iv, Scene 1.

LYSANDER.

"How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?"

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act i, Scene 1.

OTHELLO.

"... thou young and rose-lipt cherubin,
Ay, there, look grim as hell!"

Othello. Act iv, Scene 2.

[Continued on p. 117.]

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Juliet's saying about the rose has now become a proverb :—

“What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet”¹;

Much as he loved roses Shakespeare, in common with thousands of rose lovers, had no desire for roses out of season :—

“At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new fangled earth;
But like of each thing that in season grows.”²

Lilies Shakespeare mentions over twenty times and though he does not refer to the Madonna lily by name, there is no doubt that this was “the unsullied lily”³ the “sweetest, fairest lily”⁴ of which he writes. For the

Note continued from p. 116.]

JULIA.

“But since she did neglect her looking-glass
And threw her sun-expelling mask away,
The air hath starved the roses in her cheeks,
And pinch'd the lily-tincture of her face,
That now she is become as black as I.”

Two Gentlemen of Verona. Act iv, Scene 4.

TIMON.

“... bring down rose-cheekt youth to
The tub-fast and the diet.”

Timon of Athens. Act iv, Scene 3.

“... The colour in thy face
That even for anger makes the lily pale,
And the red rose blush at her own disgrace,
Shall plead for me, and tell my loving tale.”

Lucrece.

“Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come.”

Sonnet CXVI.

“Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under.”

Lucrece.

“... Whereat a sudden pale,
Like lawn being spread upon the blushing rose,
Usurps her cheek.

Venus and Adonis.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene 1.

² *Love's Labour's Lost.* Act i, Scene 1.

³ *Ibid.* Act iv, Scene 2.

⁴ *Cymbeline.* Act iv, Scene 2.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Madonna lily, grown and valued for its medicinal qualities in Anglo-Saxon times and probably long before, remained "the lily" for centuries. Shakespeare's phrase "the lily . . . mistress of the field" :—

"Like the lily
That once was mistress of the field and flourished
I'll hang my head and perish." ¹

recalls Spenser's epithet for the lily—"lady of the flow'ring field." ² In the following passages the references are also to the actual flower.

Titus.

" Fresh tears
Stood on her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gathered lily almost withered."

Titus Andronicus. Act iii, Scene 1.

"For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

Sonnet XCIV.

Princess.

"Now by my maiden honour yet as pure
As the unsullied lily."

Love's Labour's Lost. Act v, Scene 2.

Perdita.

. . . Lilies of all kinds.

The Winter's Tale. Act iv, Scene 3.

Lance.

"Look you, she is as white as a lily and as small as a wand."

Two Gentlemen of Verona. Act ii, Scene 3.

¹ *King Henry the Eighth.* Act iii, Scene 1.

² *The Faerie Queene.* Act ii, Scene 6.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Constance.

"Of Nature's gifts thou may'st with lilies boast,
And with the half blown rose."

King John. Act iii, Scene 1.

Salisbury.

"To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess."

Ibid. Act iv, Scene 2.

"Nor did I wonder at the lily's white."

Sonnet XCVIII.

"The lily I condemned for thy hand."

Sonnet XCIX.

"The colour in thy face
That even for anger makes the lily pale."

Lucrece.

Guiderius, when Arviragus entered bearing Imogen as dead in his arms, apostrophized her :—

"Oh, sweetest, fairest lily !
My brother wears thee not one half so well,
As when thou grewest thyself." ¹

and in the same play, Iachimo, beholding Imogen asleep, ejaculates :—

"Cytherea,
How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily !
And whiter than the sheets." ²

In *King Henry the Eighth*, Cranmer prophesies of Queen Elizabeth :—

"Yet a virgin,
A most unspotted lily shall she pass
To the ground." ³

¹ *Cymbeline.* Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Ibid.* Act ii, Scene 2.

³ *King Henry the Eighth.* Act v, Scene 4.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Again in *The Passionate Pilgrim* :—

“ A lily pale with damask dye to grace her.”

And in *Venus and Adonis* the lily figures as a symbol of a white hand :—

“ Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
A lily prisoned in a jail of snow.”

In a passage in *Troilus and Cressida* the lily is also used symbolically :—

Troilus.

Give me swift transportance to those fields
Where I may wallow in the lily beds
Proposed for the deserfer ! ”

Troilus and Cressida. Act iii, Scene 2.

NOTE. In several passages “ lily ” is used as a synonym for white.

JULIA. “ The air has starved the roses in her cheeks,
And pinched the lily-tincture of her face.”
Two Gentlemen of Verona. Act iv, Scene 4.

MARCUS. “ Oh, had the monster seen those lily hands
Tremble like aspen leaves upon the lute.”
Titus Andronicus. Act ii, Scene 3.

THISBE. “ Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue.”
A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act iii, Scene 1.

THISBE. “ These lily lips.”
Ibid. Act v, Scene 1.

MACBETH. “ Thou lily-livered boy.”
Macbeth. Act v, Scene 3.

KENT. “ A lily-livered action-taking . . . rogue.”
King Lear. Act ii, Scene 2.

“ The silent war of lilies and of roses
Which Tarquin viewed in her fair face's field.”
Lucrece.

“ Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under.”
Ibid.

“ She locks her lily fingers one in one.”
Venus and Adonis.





Garden Flowers and Fruits

Through the centuries the word "lily" has been inaccurately applied to many flowers not even of the lily tribe. Perdita's saying is a classical instance :—

"Lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one." ¹

All the other passages in which the fleur-de-luce figures the reference is to the cognizance of France and whether Shakespeare had in mind a lily or an iris will probably never be satisfactorily settled. Both Chaucer and Saint Francis de Sales (a contemporary of Shakespeare) called the Madonna lily "flower-de-luce". On the other hand, in the writings of Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Bacon, the flower-de-luce is obviously the iris. In addition to the evidence adduced by others in support of the theory that Shakespeare's "flower-de-luce" as the cognizance of France is the iris, I venture to submit the following. Firstly, the iris from time immemorial has been the symbol of royalty and as such is figured in Adorations by the great painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Secondly, from very early times the iris had been as favourite a garden flower as the Madonna lily. Walafred Strabo, writing *circa* A.D. 800, mentions in his *Hortulus* the iris amongst the flowers he grew and the flower is depicted frequently on the borders of medieval missals, etc., amongst other garden favourites, such as pinks, roses, Madonna lilies, periwinkles, etc. The following are Shakespeare's references to the flower as the cognizance of France :—

King Henry.

"What say'st thou, my fair flower-de-luce?"

King Henry the Fifth. Act v, Scene 2.

¹ *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 3.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Messenger.

“ Cropt are the flower-de-luces in your arms ;
Of England's coat one half is cut away.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part i, Act i, Scene i.

Duke of York.

“ A sceptre shall it have—have I a soul,
On which I'll toss the flower-de-luce of France.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act v, Scene i.

To Perdita carnations and “ streaked gilliflowers ” were “ the fairest flowers o' the season ”. Nowadays roses reign in July as in June, but in Shakespeare's day the glory of the roses was over by July and consequently carnations were more highly esteemed than they are to-day. Few flowers indeed were more popular. Ben Jonson's “ rich carnations ”, the “ streaked gilliflowers ” beloved by Spenser, were the chief florists' flowers, and leading growers vied with each other in producing the finest varieties. One of the most noted of these enthusiasts was a certain Master Ralph Tuggie of Westminster, mentioned in this connection both in Parkinson's *Paradisus* and in Johnson's edition of Gerard's *Herbal*. In the latter we read that Master Tuggie's garden in “ the excellencie and varietie of these delights exceedeth all that I have seene ”. Some of the best carnations were named after him—“ Master Tuggie's Princesse,” and “ Master Tuggie his Rose gilliflower ”. It is pleasant to recall also the delightful passage by that great Yorkshire gardener of the early seventeenth century—William Lawson. For he too was a great lover of carnations. “ I have of them,” he says, “ nine or ten several colours and divers of them as big as Roses. Of all flowers (save the Damask rose) they are the most pleasant in sight and smell.”



IRIS

by

JACQUES le MOYNE de MORGUES



Garden Flowers and Fruits

A passage in *The Winter's Tale* shows that Shakespeare was familiar with the art of the hybridist :—

Perdita.

“ The fairest flowers o’ the season
Are our carnations, and streak’d gillyvors,
Which some call nature’s bastards : of that kind
Our rustic garden’s barren, and I care not
To get slips of them.”

Polixenes.

“ . . . Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them ? ”

Perdita.

“ For I have heard it said,
There is an art, which, in their piedness, shares
With great creating nature.”

Polixenes.

“ Say, there be :
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean : so, o’er that art,
Which, you say, adds to nature, is an art,
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of noble race : this is an art
Which does mend nature,—change it rather ; but
The art itself is nature.”

Perdita.

“ So it is.”

Polixenes.

“ Then make your garden rich in gillyvors,
And do not call them bastards.”

Perdita.

“ I’ll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them :
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say, t’were well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.”¹

¹ *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 3.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

The crown imperial figures amongst Perdita's flowers. Yet this flower was of comparatively recent introduction in Shakespeare's time and Gerard speaks of it as a rare and strange plant. Parkinson chose the new spring flowering treasure from Persia for the subject of the first chapter of his *Paradisus*. "The Crown Imperial" he says "for his stately beautifulnesse deserveth the first place in this our Garden of delight". Though the crown imperial was then a novelty Shakespeare had observed that it flowered at the same time as oxlips.

Perdita.

" Bold oxlips and
The crown imperial." ¹

In Elizabethan (as indeed, in Victorian times) cottagers were wont to transfer oxlips from the meadows to their gardens. The oxlip, now, alas, increasingly rare, is amongst our handsomest wild plants and "bold" is a peculiarly apt description of the flowers. Oxlips grew on Titania's bank and the flowers figure also in the song in the *Two Noble Kinsmen* :—

"Oxlips in their cradles growing,
Marigolds on death-beds blowing,
Larks-heels trim." ²

Marigolds have been favourites for centuries and but for a period during late Victorian times when these beautiful flowers were regarded as common, they have always appealed to flower lovers. Not least for the striking beauty of their colour, a true gold with which even now no other flower can compare, especially when seen in masses. In

¹ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Two Noble Kinsmen*. Act i, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

medieval days marigolds were called "golds" and Chaucer depicts Jealousy wearing a garland of them. The flower's "obedience" to the sun has been noted from early days. Hence the popular names "Husbandman's Dyall" and "Summer's Bride". Bullein, the author of *Bulwarke of Defence*, says of the marigold, "It openeth his Flower and turneth round all day after the Sun, and closeth in his golden beames all night." To this characteristic Shakespeare refers in a lovely passage in *Lucrece* :—

"Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheathed their light
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay
Till they might open to adorn the day." ¹

And to marigolds Shakespeare compares royal favourites :—

"Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread
But as the marigolds at the sun's eye,
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die." ²

Marigolds were among the flowers—"hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram"—chosen by Perdita to give to men of middle age.

"The marigold that goes to bed with the sun
And with him rises weeping ; these are flowers
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age." ³

And marigolds were amongst the flowers Marina strewed on Thaisa's grave :—

"The purple violets and marigolds
Shall as a chaplet hang upon thy grave
While summer days do last." ⁴

¹ *Lucrece*.

² Sonnet XXV.

³ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

⁴ *Pericles*. Act iv, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

The humble but favourite pink figures now as it did in Shakespeare's day in the term "pink of courtesy".

Mercutio.

"Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy."

Romeo.

"Pink for flower?"

Mercutio.

"Right."¹

Columbines were amongst the flowers offered by Ophelia :—

"There's fennel for you and columbines."²

and the flower is also mentioned in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Armado.

"I am that flower."

Dumain.

"That mint."

Longaville.

"That columbine."³

The columbines of Shakespeare's time are rarely grown nowadays, for they have been supplanted by the long-spurred modern hybrids. The columbines he knew were *Aquilegia vulgaris* and its varieties. These old-fashioned columbines were grown in almost every cottage garden in Victorian times and were commonly known as "granny bonnets".

Peonies were as commonly grown as columbines even in cottage gardens, but whether Shakespeare referred to peonies in the lines—

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene 3.

² *Hamlet.* Act iv, Scene 5.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost.* Act v, Scene 2.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

“Thy banks with pioned and twilled brims
Which spongy April at thy hest betrimms.”¹

is more than doubtful. Shakespeare must have been familiar with peonies, for the old red peony, *P. officinalis*, was grown even in Saxon times. And he would certainly have known that peonies neither flower in April nor grow by the stream side. It is more likely that “pioned” means dug out.

Shakespeare refers twice to the poisonous monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*). In his day it was accounted the most deadly of poisons, for mineral poisons were unknown. Hence the force of his simile in comparing its effect to gunpowder:—

King Henry.

“A hoop of gold to bind thy brothers in,
That the united vessel of their blood,
Mingled with venom of suggestion,
(As, force perforce, the age will pour it in),
Shall never leak, though it do work as strong
As aconitum, or rash gunpowder.”²

and Romeo’s demand

“Come hither, man—I see that thou art poor;
Hold, there is forty ducats: let me have
A dram of poison: such soon-speeding gear
As will disperse itself through all the veins,
That the life-weary taker may fall dead;
And that the trunk may be discharg’d of breath
As violently as hasty powder fir’d
Doth hurry from the fatal cannon’s womb.”³

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* there is an allusion to

¹ *The Tempest*. Act iv, Scene i.

² *King Henry the Fourth*. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 4.

³ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act v, Scene i.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Bachelors' buttons, a popular name that has been applied for centuries to many double button-like flowers.

Host.

“What say you to young Master Fenton? he capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May; he will carry't, he will carry't; 'tis in his buttons; he will carry't.”¹

Even in Victorian times country folk were wont to carry “Bachelors' buttons” (the name was applied to various flowers, even daisies) in their pockets to divine whether their love affairs would prosper. If the flower remained fresh it was supposed to augur good success, if it faded, ill success. We have Gerard's authority for it that the name in Shakespeare's day was applied to the double aconite leaved crowfoot—*Ranunculus aconitifolius fl. pl.* The origin of this double variety of *R. aconitifolius* (commonly known as Fair Maids of France) is unknown and it may have originated in this country. Gerard says “It groweth in the gardens of herbalists and lovers of strange plants whereof we have good plentie, but it groweth not wild anywhere”. Certainly the popular name “Bachelors' Buttons” is a singularly apt one, for the flowers are exquisitely trim and neat, pure white and very double. “Bachelors' Buttons” was also applied in olden times to *Ranunculus acris plenus*, with flowers like diminutive yellow roses. The flowers of both *Ranunculus aconitifolius fl. pl.* and *R. acris plenus* figure frequently in conventionalized forms in Tudor and Stuart needlework. Also varieties with green centres, such as *R. speciosus fl. pl.*

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act iii, Scene 2.



DOUBLE DAISY AND PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY (*underside*)

by

JACQUES le MOYNE de MORGUES



Garden Flowers and Fruits

Although he does not actually mention the anemone by name, this is doubtless the flower to which Shakespeare refers in the passage in *Venus and Adonis* :—

“By this the boy that by her side lay killed
Was melted like a vapour from her sight.
And in his blood that on the ground lay spilled,
A purple flower sprang up checkered with white,
Resembling well his pale cheeks and the blood
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood.”

Both Spenser and Ben Jonson refer to the Adonis flower obviously with reference to the flower of the classical legend, but Shakespeare alone describes it. “Checkered” was not used formerly in our strict sense of square divisions, but was applied equally to streaks and spots.

The cultivated trees Shakespeare mentions are the cypress, cedar, lime, sycamore, sweet bay, myrtle, and olive. The date of the introduction of the common cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) is unknown, but it was before Shakespeare’s day, for the tree figures in Turner’s *Names of Herbes* (1548). From very early times the tree has been one of evil repute and Shakespeare associates it in one passage with “murdering basilisks”, “lizards’ stings”, “boding screech-owls”, etc.

“Gall, worse than gall, the daintiest that they taste !
Their sweetest shade a grove of cypress trees !
Their chiefest prospect murdering basilisks !
Their softest touch as smart as lizards’ stings !
Their music frightful as serpents’ hiss,
And boding screech-owls make the concert full !
All the foul terrors in dark-seated hell—”¹

The tree is also mentioned in *Coriolanus* (Act i, Scene 10).

Tullus Aufidius.

“I am attended at the cypress grove.”

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act iii, Scene 2.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Cypress has also always been associated with death. Spenser called it "cypress funereal". The wood was used in classical times for the making of coffins for the wealthy and according to Douce this is the allusion in the Clown's song in *Twelfth Night* :—

"Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid." ¹

The wood of the common cypress is not only exceptionally durable, but it is insect proof and consequently was formerly much more valued for making chests for clothes and fabrics generally. Hence Gremio's allusion to "cypress chests" :—

"In ivory coffers I have stuff'd my crowns
In cypress chests my arras counter points,
Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,
Fine linen, Turkey cushions, boss'd with pearl,
Valance of Venice gold in needlework." ²

The "cyprus" mentioned in Autolycus' song is a fine black fabric. The modern word is crape.

"Lawn as white as driven snow ;
Cyprus, black as e'er was crow." ³

The cedar as a living tree Shakespeare cannot have known, for it was only introduced into this country in 1676. Nearly all his references to the cedar are suggestive of the descriptions of this tree in the Bible. The following are the passages in which it is mentioned.

"The sun ariseth in his majesty,
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
That cedar tops and hills seem burnish'd gold."

Venus and Adonis.

¹ *The Twelfth Night.* Act ii, Scene 4.

² *The Taming of the Shrew.* Act ii, Scene 1.

³ *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 3.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

"The cedar stoops not at the base shrub's foot,
But low shrubs wither at the cedar's root."

Lucrece.

Coriolanus.

" Then let the mutinous winds
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun."

Coriolanus. Act v, Scene 3.

Titus

"Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we."

Titus Andronicus. Act iv, Scene 3.

Posthumus.

"When from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches,
which being dead many years, shall after revive, be
jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow."

Cymbeline. Act v, Scene 4.

Soothsayer.

"The lofty cedar, royal Cymbeline,
Personates thee; and thy lopp'd branches point
Thy two sons forth, who by Belarius stol'n,
For many years thought dead, are now revived,
To the majestic cedar join'd, whose issue
Promises Britain peace and plenty."

Cymbeline. Act v, Scene 5.

Gloucester.

"But I was born so high,
Our aery buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind and scorns the sun."

King Richard the Third. Act i, Scene 3.

Warwick.

"As on a mountain top the cedar shows,
That keeps his leaves in spite of any storm."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act v, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Warwick.

"Thus yields the cedar to the axe's edge,
Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle,
Under whose shade the ramping lion slept,
Whose top branch overpeered Jove's spreading trees,
And kept low shrubs from winter's powerful wind."

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act v, Scene 2.

Cranmer.

" He shall flourish,
And like a mountain cedar reach his branches
To all the plains about him."

King Henry the Eighth. Act v, Scene 4.

Prospero.

" And by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar."

The Tempest. Act v, Scene 1.

Dumain.

"As upright as the cedar."

Love's Labour's Lost. Act iv, Scene 3.

The common lime tree (*Tilia vulgaris*) is generally believed to have been introduced in very early times, possibly by the Romans, but the small-leaved species, *T. cordata*, and the large-leaved species, *T. platyphyllos*, are believed to be indigenous. Shakespeare spells the name "line", other old forms of the name being linden and lind. Chaucer called the tree lynde. Shakespeare only mentions the tree twice. In *The Tempest* he refers to the old custom of planting this tree as a weather protection.

Prospero.

"How fare the King and's followers?"

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Ariel.

“Confin’d together
In the same fashion as you gave in charge,
Just as you left them; all prisoners, sir,
In the line grove which weather fends your cell.”¹

And in the same play Prospero says—

“Come hang them on this line.”²

The sycamore (*Acer pseudo platanus*) is not indigenous, though it has long been one of our commonest trees. In Shakespeare’s time as in medieval days the wood was commonly used for making trenchers, cups, etc. He mentions the tree three times :—

Boyet.

“Under the cool shade of a sycamore
I thought to close mine eyes some half an hour.”

Love’s Labour’s Lost. Act v, Scene 2.

Desdemona (singing).

“The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree.”

Othello. Act iv, Scene 3.

Benolio.

“Underneath the grove of sycamore,
That westward rooteth from the city’s side
So early walking did I see your son.”

Romeo and Juliet. Act i, Scene 1.

There are various references to the “bay” and “laurel” and in all the cases Shakespeare obviously refers to the sweet bay (*Laurus nobilis*), which in his day was usually and correctly called laurel. The shrub we call laurel had not been introduced in Elizabethan times. In *King Richard*

¹ *The Tempest.* Act v, Scene 1.

² *Ibid.*, Act iv, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

the Second Shakespeare refers to the popular belief that before the death of a king the bay trees in a country withered. Canon Ellacombe suggests that Shakespeare derived this belief from some Italian source, but Mr. S. Savage cites the following passage from Holinshed's *Chronicles*—"In this year 1399 in a manner throughout all the realm of England, old bay trees withered, and contrary to all men's thinking grew green again, a strange sight, and supposed to import some unknown event."

Captain.

"'Tis thought the King is dead ; we will not stay.
The bay trees in the country are all wither'd." ¹

There are four references to the "laurel crowns" (crowns of sweet bay) awarded to victors in classical times.

Cleopatra.

" Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory."

Antony and Cleopatra. Act i, Scene 3.

Titus.

"Cometh Andronicus bound with laurel-boughs."

Titus Andronicus. Act i, Scene 2.

Ulysses.

"Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels."

Troilus and Cressida. Act i, Scene 3.

Clarence.

"To whom the heavens in thy maturity
Adjudged an olive branch and laurel crown
As likely to be blest in peace and war."

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act iv, Scene 6.

¹ *King Richard the Second.* Act ii, Scene 4.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

The Vision.

“Enter, solemnly tripping one after another, six personages, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces; branches of bays or palm in their hands.”

King Henry the Eighth. Act iv, Scene 2.

The myrtle figures in several passages :—

Isabella.

“Merciful Heaven,
Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Splitst the unwedgeable and gnarled oak
Than the soft myrtle.”

Measure for Measure. Act ii, Scene 2.

Euphronius.

“I was of late as petty to his ends
As is the morn-dew on the myrtle leaf
To his grand sea.”

Antony and Cleopatra. Act iii, Scene 12.

“Venus with young Adonis sitting by her,
Under a myrtle shade began to woo him.”

The Passionate Pilgrim.

“This said, she hasteth to a myrtle grove.”

Venus and Adonis.

“There will I make thee a bed of roses
With a thousand fragrant posies ;
A cap of flowers and a kirtle,
Embroiderd all with leaves of myrtle.”

The Passionate Pilgrim.

“As it fell upon a day,
In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade,
Which a grove of myrtles made.”¹

The Passionate Pilgrim.

¹ This song is assigned to Richard Barnfield, as it is in his *Poems in Divers Humours* (1598).

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Olives Shakespeare mentions eight times. Most of his references are to its emblematic character, and it is unlikely he was familiar with the living tree. The date of the introduction of the olive is unknown, but it is more than likely that it was introduced by the Romans, if not before. The rind of the tree figures in a prescription in the tenth century *Leech Book of Bald*. The following are the references to olives :—

“ And peace proclaims olives of endless age.”

Sonnet CVII.

Alcibiades.

“ Bring me into your city,
And I will use the olive with my sword.”

Timon of Athens. Act v, Scene 4.

Cæsar.

“ The time of universal peace is near :
Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nook't world
Shall bear the olive freely.”

Antony and Cleopatra. Act iv, Scene 6.

Westmoreland.

“ There is not now a rebel's sword unsheathed,
But Peace puts forth her olive everywhere.”

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 4.

Clarence.

“ No, Warwick, thou art worthy of the sway,
To whom the heavens, in thy nativity
Adjudged an olive-branch and laurel-crown,
As likely to be blest in peace, and war.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act iv, Scene 6.

Viola.

“ I bring no overture of war, no taxation of homage.
I hold the olive in my hand, my words are as full of peace
as matter.”

Twelfth Night. Act i, Scene 5.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Rosalind.

“ If you will know my house,
’Tis at the tuft of olives here hard by.”

As You Like It. Act iii, Scene 5.

Oliver.

“ Good morrow, fair ones : pray you if you know
Where, in the purlieus of this forest, stands
A sheep-cote fenced about with olive trees.”

Ibid. Act iv, Scene 3.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries orchards were commonly stocked not only with fruits but also nuts. For this we have the authority of both Tusser and Parkinson. Shakespeare refers to many fruits and nuts. Apples then as now were grown in abundance, and Shakespeare mentions crab-apples, codlings, pippins, leathercoats, apple-johns, bitter-sweetings, pomewaters, and costards. It is curious that he never mentions cider. Crab-apples nowadays are seldom used except in making jelly, but in Shakespeare’s time roasted crab-apples dropped into ale was a favourite drink. There are two references to crab-apples served thus. In the winter song in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* :—

“ When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl
Then nightly sings the staring owl.”¹

And Puck, recounting his frolics, says :—

“ And sometimes lurk I in a gossip’s bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks against her lips I bob,
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.”²

¹ *Love’s Labour’s Lost.* Act v, Scene 2.

² *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* Act ii, Scene 1.

There are various other references to crab-apples :—

Fool.

“ Thy other daughter will use thee kindly, for though she is as like thee as
a crab’s like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.”

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Although codlings are mentioned in *Twelfth Night* it is obvious from this passage that the name was applied to any immature apple.

Malvolio.

"No yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy . . . as a codling when 'tis almost an apple." ¹

The name pippin was applied in general to any apple raised from seed and in particular to the long keeping apples, still known as pippins, even if grafted:—

"You shall see mine orchard, where in an arbour we will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting with a dish of caraways." ²

The "dish of caraways" is usually taken to refer to caraway seeds which in Shakespeare's time were commonly

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Lear.

"What can'st tell, boy?"

Fool.

"She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab."

King Lear. Act i, Scene 5.

Petruchio.

"Nay, come, Kate, come, you must not look so sour."

Katherina.

"It is my fashion when I see a crab."

Petruchio.

"Why here's no crab and therefore look not sour."

The Taming of the Shrew. Act ii, Scene 1.

Caliban.

"I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow."

The Tempest. Act ii, Scene 2.

Porter.

"Fetch me a dozen crab tree staves and strong ones."

King Henry the Eighth. Act v, Scene 3.

Menenius.

"We have some old crab-trees here at home that will not
Be grafted to your relish."

Coriolanus. Act ii, Scene 1.

Suffolk.

" and noble stock

Was graft with crab tree slip; whose fruit thou art."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 2.

¹ *Twelfth Night.* Act i, Scene 5.

² *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act v, Scene 3.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

eaten with apples (fresh or roasted). Canon Ellacombe considered Shakespeare referred to the carraway apple, yet from the context this seems unlikely. The leathercoats subsequently offered by Davy to Bardolph were russet apples.

Davy.

"There's a dish of leather coats for you." ¹

Pippins are also mentioned in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* :—

Evans.

"I will make an end of my dinner. There's pippins and cheese to come." ²

The apple John (known in France as *Deux ans*) was reputed to keep good for two years and Parkinson in his *Paradisus* describes it as "enduring good longer than any other apple". The flavour was supposed to be best when the skin was shrivelled. Hence Falstaff's simile :—

"Why my skin hangs about me like an old lady's loose gown :
I am wither'd like an old apple-john." ³

Again in the same play :—

1st Drawer.

"What the devil hast thou brought there ? Apple-Johns ?
thou know'st Sir John cannot endure an apple-John."

2nd Drawer.

"Mass, thou sayest true. The prince once set a dish of apple-Johns before him, and told him, there were five more Sir Johns : and putting off his hat, said, 'I will now take my leave of these six dry, round, old, withered knights.' " ⁴

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act v, Scene 3.

² *Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act i, Scene 2.

³ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part i, Act iii, Scene 3.

⁴ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

The Bitter-sweet is still grown, though not commonly. This apple is mentioned in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Mercutio.

“Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting; it is a most sharp sauce.”

Romeo.

“And is it not well served to a sweet goose?”¹

The pomewater is amongst the apples described and figured in the *Paradisus*. Parkinson writes of it “The Pomewater is an excellent good and great whitish apple, full of sap or moisture, somewhat pleasant sharp, but a little bitter withall: it will not last long, the winter frosts soon causing it to rot and perish”. Shakespeare mentions it in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Holofernes.

“The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*,—in blood: ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *cælo*,—the sky, the welkin, the heaven; and anon falleth like a crab, on the face of *terra*,—the soil, the land, the earth.”²

The costard is mentioned in *King Richard the Third*, being used to denote a man’s head.

First Murderer.

“Take him over the costard with the hilts of thy sword and then we will chop him in the malmsey butt in the next room.”³

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act ii, Scene 3.

² *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Act iv, Scene 2.

³ *King Richard the Third*. Act i, Scene 4.

The following references to apples in general may also be cited:—

Antonio.

“An apple cleft in two is not more twin
Than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian?”

Twelfth Night. Act v, Scene 1.

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Garden Flowers and Fruits

Pears Shakespeare mentions but four times, yet Gerard states that to recount the varieties were "to number those things that are without number". Shakespeare mentions specifically the Wardon pear and the Poperinge. The Wardon pear was for centuries one of the most commonly grown pears in this country. The name is said to have originated in the monastery of Wardon near Bedford.

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Sebastian.

"I think he will carry this island home in his pocket and give it to his son for an apple."

Antonio.

"And, sowing the kernels of it in the sea, bring forth more islands."

The Tempest. Act ii, Scene 1.

Antonio.

"An evil soul, producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple, rotten at the heart."

The Merchant of Venice. Act 1, Scene 3.

Tranio.

"He is my father, sir; and sooth to say,
In countenance somewhat doth resemble you."

Biondello.

"As much as an apple doth an oyster."

The Taming of the Shrew. Act iv, Scene 2.

Porter.

"These are the youths that thunder at a play-house and fight for bitten apples."

King Henry the Eighth. Act v, Scene 3.

Hortensio.

"There's small choice in rotten apples."

The Taming of the Shrew. Act i, Scene 1.

Orleans.

"Foolish curs! that run winking into the mouth of a Russian bear, and have their heads crusht like rotten apples."

King Henry the Fifth. Act iii, Scene 7.

"How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!"

Sonnet XCIII.

Petruchio.

"What's this? A sleeve? 'Tis like a demi-cannon,
What! up and down, carved like an apple-tart."

The Taming of the Shrew. Act iv, Scene 3.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Three Wardons Pears figured as the arms of the house. Parkinson in his *Paradisus* says—"The Warden or Luke-wards Pear are of two sorts, both white and red, both great and small. The Spanish Warden is greater than either of both the former and better also. . . . The red Warden and the Spanish Warden are reckoned amongst the most excellent of Pears, either to bake or to roast, for the sick or for the sound—and indeed the Quince and the Warden are the only two fruits that are permitted to the sick to eat at any time."

Wardon pies in Shakespeare's day were coloured with saffron, just as nowadays we colour cooked pears with cochineal. In *The Winter's Tale* warden pies coloured with saffron were served at the sheep-shearing feast.

Clown.

"I must have saffron to colour the Warden pies."¹

Two kinds of popering pears are mentioned by Parkinson—"summer popperins" and "winter popperins". He describes them as "very good firm dry pears somewhat spotted and brownish on the outside".

Shakespeare's reference to this pear occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Mercutio.

"O Romeo . . . thou a popering pear!"²

There are two other references to pears :—
Falstaff.

"I warrant they would whip me with their fine wits till
I were as crestfallen as a dried pear."

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Act iv, Scene 5.

¹ *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 2.

² *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Parolles.

"Your viginity, your old viginity is like one of our French withered pears; it looks ill, it eats drily; marry, 'tis a withered pear, it was formerly better; marry yet 'tis a withered pear."

All's Well that Ends Well. Act i, Scene 1.

Plums were a favourite fruit in Shakespeare's day and there was a remarkable range of varieties. Gerard states that it would take a volume to treat of them adequately and that he grew sixty sorts in his London garden. It is curious that Shakespeare makes no mention of our wild "plum", commonly known as blackthorn, sloe, or bullace. The garden plum was probably introduced in Roman times if not before. "Plum" and "damson" were formerly used as synonymous terms. For instance, in *King Henry the Sixth* :—

Cardinal.

"What ! art thou lame ? "

Simpcox.

"Ay, God Almighty help me ! "

Suffolk.

"How cam'st thou so ? "

Simpcox.

"A fall off of a tree."

Wife.

"A plum-tree, master."

Gloucester.

"How long hast thou been blind ? "

Simpcox.

"O ! born so, master."

Gloucester.

"What ! and wouldst climb a tree ? "

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Simpcox.

"But that in all my life, when I was a youth."

Wife.

"Too true, and bought his climbing very dear."

Gloucester.

"Mass, thou lov'dst plums well that wouldst venture so."

Simpcox.

"Alas, good master, my wife desir'd some damsons,
And made me climb with danger of my life."¹

Cherries figure conspicuously and delightfully in the imagery Shakespeare drew from fruits. Demetrius described Helena's lips as "kissing cherries":—

"O! how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!"²

In the same scene Helena compares herself and Hermia to "a double cherry":—

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene i.

The following are other references to plums:—

"Like a green plum that hangs upon a tree
And falls through wind before the fall should be."
Venus and Adonis

"The mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast,
Or being early pluckt is sour to taste."
Venus and Adonis.

HAMLET. "The satirical rogue saith that old men have grey beards,
their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and
plum-tree gum."

Hamlet. Act ii, Scene 2.

POET. "Our poesy is a gum, which oozes
From whence 'tis nourisht."

Timon of Athens. Act i, Scene i.

CONSTANCE. "Give grandam Kingdom, and it grandam will
Give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig."

King John. Act ii, Scene i.

EVANS. "I will also dance and eat plums at your weddings."

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Act v, Scene 5.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iii, Scene 2.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Helena.

“ So we grew together
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition ;
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.” ¹

In the case of most fruits no two specimens are alike, but country folk have always noted the similarity of cherries. Hence the allusion in *King Henry the Eighth* :—

Old Lady.

“ ’Tis as like you
As cherry is to cherry.” ²

There is another reference to the fruit in *Venus and Adonis* :—

“ When he was by, the birds such pleasure took,
That some would sing, some others in their bills
Would bring him mulberries and ripe-red cherries ;
He fed them with his sight, they him with berries.”

The old game of cherry pit (throwing the stones into little holes) is mentioned in *Twelfth Night*.

Sir Toby Belch.

“ What, man ! ’tis not for gravity to play at cherry-pit
with Satan.” ³

and a cherry stone is used as a simile for an object of no value by Dromio :—

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act iii, Scene 2.

² *King Henry the Eighth*. Act v, Scene 1.

³ *Twelfth Night*. Act iii, Scene 4.

“ Cherry ” is used several times as a synonym for “ cherry coloured ” :—

THISBE. “ My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones.”

THISBE. “ This cherry nose.”

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act v, Scene 1.

DUKE OF GLOUCESTER.

“ We say that Shore’s wife hath a pretty foot, a
cherry lip.”

King Richard the Third. Act i, Scene 1.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

“ Some devils ask but the paring of one’s nail,
A rush, a hair, a drop of blood, a pin,
A nut, a cherry stone.” ¹

The apricot is generally accounted the most important fruit introduced during Tudor times. According to Hakluyt it was Wolf, gardener to Henry VIII, who brought it to England from Italy. Quite possibly it may have been introduced long before and like other plants lost to cultivation and then re-introduced. If so, Shakespeare may have been correct in placing the tree in the garden of Richard II’s queen, for otherwise this would be an anachronism :—

Gardener.

“ Go bind thou up those dangling apricocks,
Which like unruly children make their sire
Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight.
Give some supportance to the bending twig s.” ²

Apricots were amongst the fruits wherewith Titania commanded her fairies to feed Bottom :—

“ Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.” ³

The closely allied peach has been grown in these islands from very early times. It is generally believed to have been introduced by the Romans. Shakespeare mentions “peach” twice, but both times in reference to its colour :—

Clown.

“ Then is there here one Master Caper, at the suit of Master
Three-pile the mercer, for some four suits of peach-
colour’d satin, which now peaches him a beggar.”

Measure for Measure. Act iv, Scene 3.

¹ *The Comedy of Errors.* Act iv, Scene 3.

² *King Richard the Second.* Act iii, Scene 4.

³ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* Act iii, Scene 1.

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Prince Harry.

“Take note how many pair of silk stockings thou hast ;
viz., these and those that were thy peach-colour’d ones.”

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 2.

Mulberries and figs have also been grown in these islands for many centuries. Mulberries were commonly grown even in Saxon times, for morat (then a favourite drink) was made from the fruit and honey. The mulberry Shakespeare planted in the garden of New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, survived till about 1756. In that year it was barbarously cut down for firewood by the then owner of New Place—the Rev. Francis Gastrell. The tree now growing in the garden of New Place is a scion of the original. Shakespeare in *Coriolanus* refers to the well-known characteristic of the ripe fruit, i.e. that it cannot be handled for a moment without damaging it:—

Volumnia.

“Thy stout heart
Now humble as the ripest mulberry,
That will not hold the handling.”¹

Mulberries were amongst the fruits Titania commanded her fairies to offer Bottom,² and Adonis was fed with mulberries and cherries by the birds.³ The tree is mentioned in the Prologue to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act v:—

“Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade
His dagger drew and died.”

The date of the introduction of the fig tree into this country is unknown. Probably it was introduced by the Romans, but there is a tradition that Thomas a Becket

¹ *Coriolanus.* Act iii, Scene 2.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iii, Scene 1.

³ *Venus and Adonis.*

Garden Flowers and Fruits

planted the first fig tree in England at Tarring on his return from a pilgrimage to Rome. Green figs were amongst the fruits Titania bade her fairies offer to Bottom,¹ and presumably the figs mentioned in *Antony and Cleopatra* were green figs. Charmian in reply to a soothsayer who had promised her long life says : "O excellent, I love long life better than figs."²

Again in the last act :—

Guard.

"Here is a rural fellow
That will not be denied your Highness' presence,
He brings you figs."³

In the same play there is the only reference to fig leaves :—

First Guard.

"This is an aspic's trail and these fig leaves
Have slime upon them such as the aspic leaves
Upon the caves of Nile."⁴

The fig offered by Constance to her grandchild⁵ may have been either fresh or dried. Certainly cherries, plums, and figs could not have been ripe simultaneously.

Quinces and medlars have declined greatly in popular favour since Shakespeare's time. Gerard highly commends the fruit of quinces and Parkinson in his *Paradisus* says, "There is no fruit growing in the land that is of so many excellent uses as this, serving as well to make many dishes of meat for the table as for banquets and much more for their physical virtues." Shakespeare's only reference to the fruit is in *Romeo and Juliet* :—

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act iii, Scene 1.

² *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act i, Scene 2.

³ *Ibid.* Act v, Scene 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *King John.* Act ii, Scene 1.

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Nurse.

"They call for dates and quinces in the pastry." ¹

And the carpenter in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was named Quince.

We still eat medlars as they were eaten in medieval times, i.e. "bletted" (partially decayed). Chaucer refers to this custom in his prologue to the *Reeve's Tale*, and in *The Flower and the Leaf* he gives a charming description of a medlar tree in flower, with a goldfinch "leaping pretlie" from bough to bough. Shakespeare twice refers to the custom of eating "rotten medlars":—

Lucio.

"They would else have married me to the rotten medlar."

Measure for Measure. Act iv, Scene 3.

And in *As You Like It* (Act iii, Scene 2)—

Touchstone.

"Truly the tree yields bad fruit."

Rosalind.

"I'll graff it with you and then I shall graff it with a medlar ; then it will be the earliest fruit i' the country, for you'll be rotten ere you be half ripe and that's the right virtue of the medlar."

There is another reference to the fruit in *Timon of Athens* (Act iv, Scene 3):—

Apemantus.

"There's a medlar for thee ; eat it."

Timon.

"On what I hate I feed not."

Apemantus.

"Dost hate a medlar ?"

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act iv, Scene 4.

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Timon.

"Ay, though it looked like thee."

Apemantus.

"An thou hadst hated meddlers sooner, thou shouldst have loved thyself better now."

The only "small fruits" Shakespeare mentions are the strawberry, gooseberry, and red currant. The strawberry grown in gardens in Elizabethan days was the wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) and to this day the pottles in which strawberries are sold remind us of the fact, for they are absurdly small for our large modern fruits. The best wild strawberries are those that grow in woodlands. In Tusser's *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandry* (1577) the instructions of September include

"Wife unto the garden and set me a plot
With strawberry roots of the best to be got.
Such growing abroad among thorns in the wood,
Well chosen and picked prove excellent good."

In Sir Hugh Platt's *Garden of Eden* (1653) woodland strawberries are specially commended for the garden—"Strawberries which grow in woods prosper best in gardens." Bacon in his *Essay Of Gardens* particularly mentioned that fading strawberry leaves have "a most excellent cordiall smell." The fading leaves of modern hybrids lack this quality, but the scent of the wild leaves when they are dying is indeed "excellent cordiall". It was formerly a popular belief that strawberries thrive best near plants "of baser quality", and the Bishop of Ely refers to this in *King Henry the Fifth* (Act i, Scene 1):—

Bishop of Ely.

"The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best

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Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality :
And so the prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness ; which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet cressive in his faculty."

Shakespeare mentions strawberries in two other plays. In *King Richard the Third*, the Duke of Gloucester asks the Bishop of Ely for some strawberries from the garden of Ely House.¹ And the handkerchief Othello had given Desdemona was embroidered with strawberries :—

Iago.

"Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief,
Spotted with strawberries, in your wife's hand ?"

Othello.

"I gave her such a one ; 'twas my first gift."

Iago.

"I know not that : but such a handkerchief
(I am sure it was your wife's) did I to-day
See Cassio wipe his beard with."

The only reference to the gooseberry is in *King Henry the Fourth*, Part ii, Act i, Scene 2 :—

"All the other gifts appertinent to man as the malice of this
age shapes them are not worth a gooseberry."

The one reference to the red currant is in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Act i, Scene 1) :—

Theseus.

"Since that our theme is haste
I stamp this kiss upon thy currant lip."

Grapes are mentioned nearly as frequently as vines and vineyards :—

¹ *King Richard the Third.* Act iii, Scene 4.

Garden Flowers and Fruits

Cleopatra.

“Give me my robe, put on my crown ; I have
Immortal longings in me ; now no more
The juice of Egypt’s grape shall moist this lip.”

Antony and Cleopatra. Act v, Scene 2.

Menenius.

“The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes.”

Coriolanus. Act v, Scene 4.

Timon.

“ Go suck the subtle blood o’ the grape
Till the high fever seethe your blood to froth.”

Timon of Athens. Act iv, Scene 3.

Iago.

“Blessed fig’s end—the wine she drinks is made of grapes.”

Othello. Act ii, Scene 1.

Lafau.

“O, will you eat no grapes, my royal fox ?
Yes, but you will my noble grapes, an if
My royal fox could reach them.”

All’s Well that Ends Well. Act ii, Scene 1.

Lafau.

“There’s one grape yet.”

All’s Well that Ends Well. Act ii, Scene 3.

Touchstone.

“The heathen philosopher,
When he had a desire to eat a grape, would open his lips
when he put it into his mouth ; meaning thereby,
that grapes were made to eat.”

As You Like It. Act v, Scene 1.

The foreign fruits mentioned by Shakespeare are the pomegranate, orange, lemon, date, colocynthis, and locust (the fruit of the carob tree). The pomegranate flowers

Garden Flowers and Fruits

and even fruits in the mildest parts of these islands, but it can scarcely be reckoned amongst the fruits of this country. The date of its introduction is unknown, but it figures amongst the trees in the *Romaunt of the Rose*. Shakespeare may have seen the living tree, for Gerard states that he had raised a young tree from seed, "attending God's leisure for flowers and fruit." Shakespeare mentions the tree twice and the fruit once. In the scene at the Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap, in *King Henry the Fourth*, Francis says :—

"Anon, anon, sir; Look down into the pomgarnet, Ralph." ¹

In *Romeo and Juliet*—

Juliet.

"Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day :
It was the nightingale and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear ;
Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree."

Romeo and Juliet. Act iii, Scene 5.

And in *All's Well that Ends Well*—

Lafeu.

"Go to, sir, you were beaten in Italy for picking a kernel out of a pomegranate." ²

It is equally possible that Shakespeare may have seen orange trees growing in this country. According to Bishop Gibson, Sir Francis Carew had orange trees growing in the open at Beddington (Surrey) in 1595, and traditionally those that were still alive in the early nineteenth century at Smorgany (Glamorganshire) were older still,

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

² *All's Well that Ends Well.* Act ii, Scene 3.

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for they were said to have been procured off a ship wrecked on the Glamorganshire coast in Henry VIII's reign. Shakespeare's references are all to the imported fruit or the colour. The following are the references in the plays :—

Menenius.

" . . . You wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a cause between an orange wife and a fosset seller.

Coriolanus. Act ii, Scene i.

Beatrice.

" The count is neither sad nor sick, nor merry, nor well, but civil, count,—civil as an orange and something of that jealous complexion."

Much Ado about Nothing. Act ii, Scene i.

Bottom.

" I will discharge it in either your straw-coloured beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-coloured beard, your perfect yellow."

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act i, Scene 2.

Bottom.

" The ousel-cock so black of hue
With orange-tawny bill."

Ibid. Act iii, Scene i.

The lemon is mentioned only once :—

Berowne.

" A lemon."

Longaville.

" Stuck with cloves."¹

Dates as dried fruits have been imported into this country at least from Saxon times and probably long before. The

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost.* Act v, Scene 2.

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Anglo-Saxon name for them was finger apple. The following are the references to the fruit in the plays :—

Pandarus.

“Do you know what a man is? Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and so forth, the spice and salt that season a man?”

Cressida.

“Ay, a minced man: and then to be baked with no date in the pie,—for then the man’s date’s out.”

Troilus and Cressida. Act i, Scene 2.

Nurse.

“They call for dates and quinces in the pantry.”

Romeo and Juliet. Act iv, Scene 4.

Parolles.

“Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than your cheek.”

All’s Well that Ends Well. Act i, Scene 1.

Clown.

“I must have saffron to colour the warden pies; mace, dates, none, that is out of my note; nutmegs, seven, a race or two of ginger—but that I may beg, four pounds of prunes and as many of raisins o’ the sun.”

The Winter’s Tale. Act iv, Scene 2.

Raisins o’ the sun (i.e. sun-dried) are now called muscatels.

The currants of commerce are the dried seedless fruits of *Vitis corinthiaca*. Prunes were evidently as much despised then as they are now. For instance, Doll Tearsheet—

“He a captain! He lives upon mouldy stew’d prunes and dried cakes.”¹

Again Falstaff :—

“There’s no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune.”²

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

² *Ibid.* Part i, Act iii, Scene 3.

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Shakespeare's reference to the coloquintida (*Cucumis colocynthis*) is not to the fresh fruit, but to the drug made from the dried fleshy part of the fruit. In *Othello*, Iago contrasts the lusciousness of locusts with the bitterness of this drug :—

“ The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts shall
be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida.” ¹

Locusts, the fruit of the carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) now so largely used in cattle and poultry food, have a very sweet taste.

The references to pepper are as follows :—

Hotspur.

“ Swear me, Kate, like a lady as thou art,
A good mouth-filling oath ; and leave ‘ in sooth ’,
And such protest of pepper gingerbread
To velvet guards, and Sunday citizens.”

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act iii, Scene 1.

Falstaff.

“ I am a pepper-corn, a brewer's horse.”

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act iii, Scene 3.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

“ Here's the challenge, read it ; I warrant there's vinegar
and pepper in't.”

Twelfth Night. Act iii, Scene 4.

Ford.

“ He cannot 'scape me, 'tis impossible he should ; he cannot
creep into a halfpenny purse nor into a pepper-box.”

Merry Wives of Windsor. Act iv, Scene 5.

Mercutio.

“ I am peppered, I warrant, for this world.”

Romeo and Juliet. Act iii, Scene 1.

¹ *Othello.* Act i, Scene 3.

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Poyntz.

"Pray God, you have not murder'd some of them."

Falstaff.

"Nay, that's past praying for; I have pepper'd two of them."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act v, Scene 3.

Shakespeare frequently drew his imagery from fruits in general. The following are some instances:—

Queen Elinor.

"For by this knot thou shalt so surely tie
Thy now unsur'd assurance to the crown,
That yon green boy shall have no sun to ripe
The bloom that promiseth a mighty fruit."

King John. Act ii, Scene 1.

Duke of Gloucester.

"The royal tree hath left us royal fruit
Which, mellow'd by the stealing hours of time
Will well become the seat of majesty."

King Richard the Third. Act iii, Scene 7.

Sir John Falstaff.

"If then, the tree may be known by the fruit as the fruit
by the tree."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

Player King.

"Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth, but poor validity,
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree
But fall, unshaken, when they mellow be."

Hamlet, Act iii, Scene 2.

Antonio.

"I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death: the weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground."

The Merchant of Venice. Act iv, Scene 1.

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Iago.

“ Though other things grow fair against the sun,
Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe.”

Othello. Act ii, Scene 3.

Macbeth.

“ Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe.”

Macbeth. Act iii, Scene 1.

Earl of Warwick.

“ Myself have often heard him say and swear
That this his love was an eternal plant.
Whereof the root was fixt in virtue’s ground,
The leaves and fruit maintain’d with beauty’s sun.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act iii, Scene 3.

King Henry.

“ Not like the fruit of such a goodly tree.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act v, Scene 6.

Duke of Gloucester.

“ And that I love the tree from whence thou sprangst,
Witness the loving kiss I give the fruit.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part iii, Act v, Scene 7.

Agamemnon.

“ Yea, like fair fruit in an unwholesome dish
Are like to rot untasted.”

Troilus and Cressida. Act ii, Scene 3.

The nuts Shakespeare mentions are the almond, nutmeg, walnut, chestnut, and hazel. The only reference to the almond is in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act v, Scene 2)—

Thersites.

“ The parrot will not do more for an almond.”

and in *Romeo and Juliet* (Act i, Scene 5) there is mention of the sweet now known as marzipan made from this nut :—

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First Serving-man.

"Good thou, save me a piece of marchpane."

There is no mention of the nutmeg tree but there are three references to the fruit, with which Shakespeare must have been familiar, for it had been introduced long before. Chaucer mentions it as a flavouring for ale. "Nutmegs seven" and mace were amongst the ingredients needed for the sheep-shearing feast in *The Winter's Tale*.¹ Mace is the inner rind of the nutmeg. The Duke of Orleans in *King Henry the Fifth* described the Dauphin's palfrey as being "of the colour of the nutmeg"² and "a gilt nutmeg" is mentioned in *Love's Labour's Lost*.³

There are only two references to the walnut :—

Petruchio.

"Why, 'tis a cockle or a walnut shell,
A knack, a toy, a trick, a baby's cap."

The Taming of the Shrew. Act iv, Scene 3.

Ford.

"Let them say of me 'As jealous as Ford who searched
a walnut shell for his wife's leman'."

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Act iv, Scene 2.

The sweet chestnut (*Castanea vulgaris*), like the walnut, has been cultivated in England for centuries, but the date of introduction is unknown. The following are the references in the plays :—

Petruchio.

"And do you tell me of a woman's tongue,
That gives not half so great a blow to th' ear,
As will a chestnut in a farmer's fire?"

The Taming of the Shrew. Act i, Scene 2.

¹ *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 2.

² *King Henry the Fifth.* Act iii, Scene 7.

³ *Love's Labour's Lost.* Act v, Scene 2.

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Rosalind.

"I' faith his hair is of a good colour."

Celia.

"An excellent colour, your chestnut was ever the only colour."

As You Like It. Act iii, Scene 4.

First Witch.

"A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
And muncht, and muncht, and muncht."

Macbeth. Act i, Scene 2.

Hazels had been cultivated in England for centuries before Shakespeare's time, both for the nuts and the oil. The following are the references in the plays :—

Mercutio.

"Thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes."

Romeo and Juliet. Act iii, Scene 1.

Petruchio.

"Kate, like the hazel twig
So straight and slender, and as brown in hue
As hazel-nuts and sweeter than the kernels."

The Taming of the Shrew. Act ii, Scene 1.

Caliban.

" I'll bring thee
To clustering filberts."

The Tempest. Act ii, Scene 2.

Lafeu.

"Believe this of me, there can be no kernel in this light nut."

All's Well that Ends Well. Act ii, Scene 5.

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Touchstone.

"Sweetest nut hath sourest rind,
Such a nut is Rosalind."

As You Like It. Act iii, Scene 2.

Celia.

"For his verity in love, I do think him as concave as a
cover'd goblet or a worm-eaten nut."

As You Like It. Act iii, Scene 4.

Gonzalo.

"I'll warrant him for drowning though the ship were no
stronger than a nutshell."

The Tempest. Act i, Scene 1.

Hamlet.

"I could be bounded in a nut-shell and count myself a king
of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams."

Hamlet. Act ii, Scene 2.

Thersites.

"Hector shall have a great catch if he knock out either of
your brains, a' were as good crack a fusty nut with no
kernel."

Troilus and Cressida. Act ii, Scene 1.

Dromio.

"Some devils ask but the paring of one's nail,
A rush, a hair, a drop of blood, a pin,
A nut, a cherry-stone."

The Comedy of Errors. Act iv, Scene 3.

The two following references to nuts are important,
for they are amongst the few indications Shakespeare
gives in regard to the size of his fairies :—

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Titania.

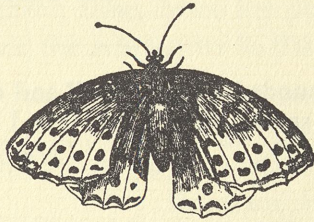
“ I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel’s hoard and fetch thee new nuts.”

A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Act iv, Scene 1.

Mercutio.

“ Her chariot is an empty hazel nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out of mind the fairies’ coachmakers.”

Romeo and Juliet. Act i, Scene 4.



CHAPTER V

HERBS AND GATHERERS OF SIMPLES

More herbs figure in Shakespeare's writings than in those of any of his contemporaries save the herbalists. He mentions over twenty herbs, exclusive of various garden flowers valued as much for their herbal properties as for their beauty.

So much stress has been laid on the importance of the herb garden in past centuries that we are apt to forget that the evergreen herbs of Southern Europe were also the "flowers of winter",¹ to use one of Shakespeare's most apt phrases. Nowadays our gardens are full of interest during the bleakest months of the year, chiefly owing to plants introduced during the last century—Chinese shrubs such as *Jasminum nudiflorum*, *Viburnum fragrans*, *Lonicera Standishii*, the winter-flowering heaths, early flowering iris and crocus species, and so forth. But in the sixteenth century the interest of the winter garden centred in the knot gardens and dwarf shrub mazes, laid out in evergreen herbs, notably rosemary, rue, lavender, winter savory, thyme, hyssop, and santolina. Shorn of these evergreen herbs, the winter gardens of past centuries would have been dull indeed. It is far a cry from Tudor knot gardens to a modern International Flower Show, but it was a knot garden laid out chiefly with Shakespeare's "flowers of winter" that won the gold medal at the 1932 International Flower Show held in New York. And there is every indication that these fascinating evergreen gardens whose beauty depends solely on the varying shades of green will again become fashionable.

¹ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

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Rosemary was the favourite decorative herb in Tudor days. "As for rosemarie," wrote Sir Thomas More, "I lette it runne all over my walls, not onelie because my bees love it but because it is the herb sacred to friendship, whence a sprig of it hath a dumb language." Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, describes it as being "in every woman's garden, it is sufficient but to name it as an ornament among other sweet herbs and flowers in our gardens". Rosemary was commonly used for topiary work and Lawson, in his *New Orchard and Garden* (1618), states that it was "sette by women for their pleasure to grow in sundry proportions as in the fashion of a cat, a peacock, or such things as they fancy". "Cheerful rosemarie," as Spenser calls it, retains its colour and fragrance so long after being picked that it was the favourite evergreen at both weddings and funerals—an emblem of constancy and remembrance. Hence "rosemary for remembrance":—

Ophelia.

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you
love, remember."¹

Friar Laurence, comforting the Capulets when Juliet was dead, said

"Heaven and yourself
Had part in this fair maid; now heaven hath all,
And all the better is it for the maid:
Your part in her you could not keep from death;
But heaven keeps his part in eternal life.

.
.

Dry up your tears and stick your rosemary
On this fair corse."²

¹ *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 5.

² *Romeo and Juliet*. Act iv, Scene 3.

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And later in the stage directions—"They all, but the nurse and musicians go forth, casting rosemary on her".

Rosemary was probably introduced in Roman times, if not before, and it is mentioned in Anglo-Saxon herbals and vocabularies, but traditionally it was re-introduced by Philippa of Hainault, Queen of Edward III. A manuscript treating of the virtues of rosemary, sent by the Countess of Hainault to her daughter, Queen Philippa, is preserved in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. Many interesting traditions about this herb are recorded in this manuscript, notably that rosemary never grows higher than the height of Christ during His earthly life, and that after thirty-three years the plant increases in breadth but not in height. Shakespeare was doubtless familiar with Bancke's *Herbal* (1525) in which the greater part of this manuscript is incorporated.

Ros marinus—dew of the sea—is not only one of the loveliest but also one of the most descriptive of plant names, for however far inland rosemary grows, its bracing fragrance suggests the sea coast, its natural habitat. In the old French language of flowers, rosemary symbolizes the power of re-kindling lost energy, and did they not try to waken the Sleeping Beauty by its aid? In Spain rosemary is highly revered, for according to an old Spanish legend the flowers were originally white, but turned blue in honour of the Virgin Mary, who threw her robe on a bush.

The culinary, medicinal, and cosmetic uses of this herb, in mediæval and Tudor days would fill a small volume. Meat dishes were commonly adorned with rosemary and bay. Hence the allusion in *Pericles* (Act iv, Scene 6), "Marry come up, my dish of chastity with rosemary

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and bays". Rosemary snow (white of egg and sugar beaten to a froth) served on a branch of rosemary, was a favourite sweetmeat, the flowers were candied and conserves made of them; wine was flavoured with the herb, and rosemary cordial was made in nearly every household. Rosemary, again, was the chief ingredient in Hungary water, the favourite toilet water for at least two centuries. The original recipe is said to have been given to Queen Elizabeth of Hungary by a hermit.

In *King Lear* there is a reference to the "bedlam beggars" sticking sprigs of rosemary into their arms :—

Edgar.

" My face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins ; elf all my hair in knots ;

· · · · ·
The country gives me proof, and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary." ¹

The only other reference to rosemary is in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act ii, Scene 4 :—

Nurse.

" Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin both with a letter ? "

Romeo.

" Ay, nurse ; what of that ? both with an R."

Nurse.

" Ah, mocker ! that's the dog's name. R is for the—No :
I know it begins with some other letter : and she hath
the prettiest sententious of it, of you and rosemary,
that it would do you good to hear it."

Rue, like rosemary, keeps " seeming and savour all the winter long " :—

¹ *King Lear*. Act ii, Scene 3.

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Perdita.

“ Reverend Sirs,
For you there’s rosemary and rue : these keep
Seeming and savour all the winter long ;
Grace and remembrance be to you both,
And welcome to our shearing.”¹

This herb figures frequently in Saxon herbals and it was highly valued for its medicinal qualities. Shakespeare twice calls it “herb of Grace”, an old name owing probably to the association of the plant with rue or repentance. Loudon writing in 1838 says rue “is to this day called Ave Grace in Sussex”. Hence the sly allusion in Ophelia’s remark to the Queen : “There’s rue for you ; and here’s some for me ; we may call it herb-grace o’ Sundays : O you must wear your rue with a difference”.²

Again in *King Richard the Second* (Act iii, Scene 4)—

“ Here did she fall a tear : here in this place
I’ll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace.
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.”

Possibly also Antony referred to rue in his reply to Domitius Enobarbus :—

“ Ho, ho, ho !
Now the witch take me if I meant it thus !
Grace grow where those drops fall ! ”³

We do not value rue for its herbal properties nowadays, but we value it, as indeed we should, as one of our most decorative small evergreen shrubs. The blue green of its foliage is wholly unlike that of any other plant and curiously

¹ *The Winter’s Tale.* Act iv, Scene 3.

² *Hamlet.* Act iv, Scene 5.

³ *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act iv, Scene 2.

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attractive. Shakespeare and Spenser differ in their appreciation of the scent. Spenser calls it "ranke smelling rue", but Shakespeare writes of its "savour" and ranked it among the nosegay herbs :—

Clown.

"Indeed, sir, she was the sweet marjoram of the sallet or rather the herb of Grace."

Lafew.

"They are not sallet herbs, you knave, they are nose herbs." ¹

Perdita's "hot lavender" ² the herb Spenser describes as "still grey" has always been valued for its fragrance and it is therefore the more noteworthy that Bacon does not list it amongst his sweet-smelling plants. Yet Parkinson places it first amongst his sweet-smelling herbs. "After all these faire and sweete flowers before specified I must needes adde a few scente herbes, both to accomplish this garden, and to please your senses, by placing them in your nosegays, or else where as you list." He describes both the tall and dwarf lavender spike, the white variety of the former and "sticadove", the lavender that grows wild so abundantly in the south of France, but is hardy only in our southern gardens. "W.M.," the author of *The Queen's Closet Opened* (1655) and cook to Queen Henrietta Maria, gives recipes for making lavender sugar (made by pounding lavender flowers with three times their weight in sugar) and lavender wine.

Mints, savory and marjoram also figured in Perdita's offering to Polixenes.³ Parkinson describes the various mints commonly grown in gardens, and he states that

¹ *All's Well that Ends Well*. Act iv, Scene 5.

² *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *Ibid*.

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“mintes are oftentimes used in baths with Baulme and other herbes as a helpe to comfort and strengthen the nerves and sinewes”, also to cure bees’ and wasps’ stings. There are about fourteen species of savory, but in Shakespeare’s day, as now, only two—winter savory and summer savory—were commonly grown. Winter savory (*S. montana*) is now a valued shrub for the rock garden, for it flowers in August, but as a seasoning herb it is neglected. Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*) was a favourite culinary and salad herb in the sixteenth century, and Parkinson says it was more commonly used in this than in any other country and was highly esteemed. Hence the Clown’s compliment—“the sweet marjoram of the sallet,”¹ and “Sweet marjoram” was the pass-word given by Edgar to King Lear.

Fennel has been used as a strewing herb and in cooking from very early times. Shakespeare twice mentions fennel, in both cases with a meaning that was doubtless obvious to the audiences of his day, but now forgotten :—

Falstaff.

“A’plays at quoits well, and eats conger and fennel.”

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

Ophelia.

“There’s fennel for you and columbines.”

Hamlet. Act iv, Scene 5.

Hyssop figures in Iago’s “garden sermon”—

“Virtue! a fig! ’tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are gardens; to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce; set hyssop, and weed up thyme; supply it with one gender of herbs, or district it with many; either to

¹ *All’s Well that Ends Well.* Act iv, Scene 5.

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have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry ;
why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies
in our wills.”¹

Hyssop was commended by Spenser “for green wounds’ remedies”. Although a picturesque shrub in flower it is seldom grown now, but so commonly in Tudor times that Parkinson, in writing of it in the kitchen-garden section of his *Paradisus* says it is unnecessary to describe a plant “knowne to all that have been in a Garden”. But in “The Garden of Pleasant Flowers” he describes four varieties and gives a delightful account of gilded hyssop with leaves “of so pleasant a colour especially in Summer, that they provoke many Gentlewomen to wear them in their heads, and on their armes, with as much delight as any faire flower can give”. Even in our grandmothers’ days, hyssop was still commonly used both for culinary and medicinal purposes. Hyssop tea and syrup were esteemed as cordials and in an old recipe book hyssop is recommended to be taken in warm ale, fasting in the morning “to cause an excellent colour and complexion”.

It is doubtful whether the thyme Iago mentions is garden thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*). Wild thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) frequently finds its way into gardens, but it is not likely that garden thyme would be “weeded up”.

Lettuces, which also figure in Iago’s sermon, were grown in Shakespeare’s time in great variety, quite as many as we have to-day. Parkinson says, “There are so many sorts and so great diversitie to Lettuce that I doubt I shall scarce be beleaved of a great many. For I doe in this Chapter reckon up unto you eleaven or twelve,

¹ *Othello*. Act i, Scene 3.





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differing sorts ; some of little use, other of more, being more common and vulgar ; and some that are of excellent use and service, which are more rare and require more knowledge and care for the ordering of them, as also for their time of spending as some in the spring, some in summer, others in autumn and some being whited for the winter." The finest kind was the Roman red lettuce. Parkinson says this was first introduced into England by John Tradescant, gardener to Charles I and Henrietta Maria, and he quotes Tradescant's authority for the statement that when cut and the refuse thrown away, this lettuce weighed over a pound. Lettuces were eaten not only in salads, but also "boyled to serve for many sorts of dishes of meate as the Cookes know best".

Salads, in Shakespeare's time were most elaborate affairs. As the cookery books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries testify, it was by no means uncommon to have as many as thirty ingredients, and the variety of these was far larger than nowadays, for apart from lettuce and other salad herbs commonly used now, almonds, marrows, berberises, broom-buds, pickled ash-keys, and elder buds, walnuts, purslane stalks, mushrooms, currants, raisins, samphire, to say nothing of fresh and candied flowers (rose petals, primroses, cowslips, violets, nasturtiums, marigold petals), and various herbs we never think of using, such as strawberry leaves, ox-eye daisy leaves, yarrow, sorrel, borage, rocket, etc., were all needed to make their "sallets all sorts", "brave warming salads", and "crowned salads". Crowned salads were very elaborate and frequently they formed the chief decoration of the banqueting table. Instructions for the making

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of these are to be found in the cookery books of the period. For instance, the centre-piece might be a castle of paste with towers and ramparts of carrots, turnips, and beet, the courtyard garden planted with small herbs and flowers, the steps surrounding the whole made of paste and each step spread with a different salad.

Radishes and parsley are two other salad herbs mentioned in the plays. The only reference to parsley is in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Act iv, Scene 4) :—

Biondello.

“I cannot tarry : I knew a wench married in the afternoon
as she went to the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit ;
and so may you, sir ; and so adieu, sir.”

There are two references to the radish :—

Prince Henry.

“What, fought ye with them all ? ”

Falstaff.

“All ? I know not what ye call all ; but if I fought not
with fifty of them I am a bunch of radish.”¹

Again, Falstaff in his contemptuous remarks about Justice Shallow, says :—

“I do remember him at Clement’s Inn, like a man made
after supper of a cheese-paring : when he was naked
he was for all the world like a forked radish, with a
head fantastically carved upon it with a knife.”²

Apart from the references to salad already mentioned, Cleopatra used the phrase “salad days” :—

“My salad days

When I was green in judgement ; cold in blood.”³

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

² *Ibid.* Part ii, Act iii, Scene 2.

³ *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act i, Scene 5.

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Mustard (*Sinapis arvensis*), then as now, was grown for the seed. The best was reputed to be that grown at Tewkesbury. Cole in his *Adam in Eden* (1657) described the mustard grown in that district as "the best that the world affords". Hence the force of Falstaff's allusion :—

Doll Tearsheet.

"They say Pointz has a good wit."

Falstaff.

"He a good wit? hang him, baboon! his wit's as thick as Tewkesbury mustard."¹

Mustard was commonly served either as nowadays in sauce form or dry like pepper.

The mustard Touchstone's Knight used with pancakes was probably in powder form :—

Rosalind.

"Where learned you that oath, fool?"

Touchstone.

"Of a certain Knight that swore by his honour they were good pancakes and swore by his honour the mustard was naught: now I'll stand to it, the pancakes were naught, and the mustard was good; and yet was not the Knight forsworn.

.

You are not forsworn: no more was the Knight, swearing by his honour, for he never had any; or if he had, he had sworn it away before ever he saw those pancakes or that mustard."²

Apart from "Mustard-seed" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the only other reference to mustard is in *The Taming of the Shrew* :—

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

² *As You Like It.* Act i, Scene 2.

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Grumio.

"What say you to a piece of beef and mustard?"

Katharine.

"A dish that I do love to feed upon."

Grumio.

"Ay, but the mustard is too hot a little."

Katharine.

"Why, then the beef, and let the mustard rest."

Grumio.

"Nay, then I will not : you shall have the mustard,
Or else you get no beef of Grumio."

Katharine.

"Then both, or one, or anything at all."

Grumio.

"Why, then the mustard without the beef." ¹

Various herbs mentioned by Shakespeare are now rarely, if ever, used. Few were more highly esteemed than Holy thistle (*Carduus benedictus*), held almost sacred, as its name implies, for its healing properties. Hence the force of Margaret's jesting prescription for Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing* :—

Margaret.

"Get you some of this distill'd *Carduus Benedictus*, and lay it to your heart : it is the only thing for a qualm."

Hero.

"There thou prick'st her with a thistle."

Beatrice.

"*Benedictus* ! Why *Benedictus* ? You have some moral in this *Benedictus*."

¹ *The Taming of the Shrew.* Act iv, Scene 3.

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Margaret.

"Moral, no, by my troth, I have no moral meaning.
I meant, plain holy thistle."¹

Plantain (*Plantago major*) we regard merely as a tiresome weed, but since Anglo-Saxon times, when it was known as Waybread, this herb has been regarded as of the highest medicinal value. In the eleventh century *Lacnunga* it is described as one of the nine sacred herbs and called "mother of worts". But Romeo's plantain leaf would be considered a poor remedy nowadays for a broken shin :—

Benolio.

"Tut man ! one fire burns out another's burning,
One pain is lessen'd by another's anguish :
Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning :
One desperate grief cures with another's languish :
Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die."

Romeo.

"Your plantain-leaf is excellent for that."

Benolio.

"For what, I pray thee ?"

Romeo.

"For your broken shin."²

Plantain figures again in *Love's Labour's Lost*, as a remedy for a broken shin :—

Costard.

"No egma, no riddle, no *l'envoy*, no salve in the mail, sir.
O sir ! plantain, a plain plantain : no *l'envoy* ; no salve
sir, but a plantain."

¹ *Much Ado about Nothing.* Act iii, Scene 4.

² *Romeo and Juliet.* Act i, Scene 2.

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Armado.

"Come hither, come hither : how did this argument begin ?"

Moth.

"By saying that a costard was broken in a shin ;
Then call'd you for the *l'envoy*."

Costard.

"True, and I for a plantain, thus came your argument in." ¹

Again in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Act i, Scene 2)—

"These poor slight sores

Need not a plantain."

Whether Troilus' "plantage" is plantain is doubtful. It is not likely that Shakespeare, who in every other instance uses the popular name, would in one instance use a form of the Latin name, a form, moreover, that is unknown. This passage is, I think, possibly a reference to the old and well-nigh world-wide belief that all plant life is under the influence of the moon—

"As true as steel, as plantage to the moon." ²

The plantain has a tendency to produce "flowers" resembling green roses and these were valued by the "curious" gardeners of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The beauty of this abnormal leaf growth of the plantain is described by Gerard as "like a fine double Rose of a hoary or rusty greene colour", and Parkinson both figures and describes the "rose plantane".

We no longer rub bee hives with balm (*Melissa officinalis*), nor furniture with juice of balm to impart a pleasant scent. Anne Page commanded the elves at Windsor Castle :—

¹ *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act iii, Scene 1.

² *Troilus and Cressida*. Act iii, Scene 2.

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“The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm and every precious flower.”¹

All the other references to “balm” are to the balsam of the East, the precious ointment made from various gum-bearing trees, notably *Balsamodendron Gileadense*.

Except in out-of-the-way parts of Cornwall, saffron is no longer used for flavouring. Indeed, amongst plants formerly grown in quantities in these islands and highly valued for medicinal value, few have so completely gone out of favour as saffron. The date of the introduction of saffron (*Crocus sativus*) is unknown, but it was probably introduced by the Romans and as a drug it was well known in Saxon times. It is the only plant that has given a name to a town in these islands—Saffron Walden. Saffron Hill (formerly part of Ely House garden) commemorates the quantity of saffron grown in that garden. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saffron grown in England was accounted the best. Shakespeare refers to its use as a colouring for warden pies—

Clown.

“I must have saffron to colour the warden pies.”²

and in three passages he uses the word as an adjective :—

Ceres.

“Who with thy saffron wings upon my flowers
Diffusest honey drops, refreshing showers.”

The Tempest. Act iv, Scene 1.

Antipholus.

“Did this companion with the saffron face
Revel and feast it at my house today?”

The Comedy of Errors. Act iv, Scene 4.

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act v, Scene 5.

² *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 2.

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Lafau.

"No, no, no ; your son was misled with a snipt-taffeta fellow there, whose villanous saffron would have made all the unbaked and doughy youth of a nation in his colour."

All's Well that Ends Well. Act iv, Scene 2.

Garlic, formerly so esteemed, is now seldom grown in this country. Shakespeare mentions the plant five times, and with one exception the references are to the intensely strong smell :—

Menenius.

"You that stood so much
Upon the voice of occupation and
The breath of garlic eaters !"

Coriolanus. Act iv, Scene 6.

Bottom.

"And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath."

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act iv, Scene 2.

Lucio.

"He would mouth with a beggar, though she smelt brown bread and garlic."

Measure for Measure. Act iii, Scene 2.

Dorcas.

"Mopsa must be your mistress ; marry, garlic to mend her kissing with."

The Winter's Tale. Act iv, Scene 3.

Hotspur.

"I had rather live
With cheese and garlic in a windmill."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act ii, Scene 1.

Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) was formerly commonly grown in herb gardens and valued both for its

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medicinal properties and to keep rooms free of fleas and to protect clothes from moths. For the two last-named purposes the seeds were used. Tusser, in his *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandry* (1573) says :—

“While wormwood hath seed, get a handful or twaine,
To save against March, to make fleas to refraine :
Where chamber is swept and wormwood is strowne
No flea for his life dare abide to be knowne.
What savour is better, if physic be true,
For places infected than wormwood or rue ?”

Gerard also extols it as a valuable herb to strew amongst clothes. Shakespeare uses “wormwood” in the Biblical fashion as a simile of something intensely bitter. Hamlet, watching the players and knowing what the effect of the Player Queen’s words must be on his mother, murmured :—
“Wormwood, wormwood.”¹

Again :—

“To weed this wormwood from your fruitful brain.”

Love’s Labour’s Lost. Act v, Scene 2.

And in *Lucrece* :—

“Thy sugar’d tongue to bitter wormwood taste.”

The only reference to the actual plant is in *Romeo and Juliet* (Act i, Scene 3). “For I had then laid wormwood to my dug.”

“Dian’s bud,” used by Oberon to free Titania from the spell cast on her by Puck, was doubtless one of the numerous Artemisias and may have been wormwood, or possibly mugwort.

Amongst the herbs popularly associated with witches, Shakespeare mentions specifically hemlock, mandrake, and

¹ *Hamlet.* Act iii, Scene. 2.

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fern seed. Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) from time immemorial a plant of evil repute on account of its poisonous nature, was believed by country folk to be collected after night-fall by witches and used by them in their concoctions. "Root of hemlock digged in the dark" was an ingredient in the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth* :—

Third Witch.

"Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark ;
Liver of blaspheming Jew ;
Gall of goat and slips of yew,
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse ;
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips." ¹

The belief that the qualities of plants are more potent if dug at night is of very ancient origin. In the Saxon herbals the information is frequently given that the plant or root to be used must be dug "when day and night divide". Until comparatively recently this belief was regarded as nonsensical, yet it is now a well-established fact that the properties of certain plants are strongest at night. In regard to hemlock the plant's poisonous properties vary according to the seasons. This, judging from the Saxon herbals, was also known to our ancestors.

The word hemlock has always been loosely applied to many members of the Umbelliferæ order, such as fools' parsley, wild carrot, chervil, etc., but Mr. Savage emphasizes that Shakespeare distinguished clearly between

¹ *Macbeth*. Act iv, Scene 1. Cf. also the passage in *Hamlet* :—
LUCIANUS.

"Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing ;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing ;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp immediately."

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene 2.

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the poisonous "hemlock" and the "hemlock" (fools' parsley, etc.) which grows in cornfields, meadows, etc. The poisonous hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) does not commonly grow in cornfields nor in meadows. It is a fairly common wayside plant and still more common in part shade near woodlands. In the references to hemlock cited below Shakespeare obviously had in mind one of the harmless hemlocks such as fools' parsley :—

"Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow weeds,
With bur-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flowers,
Darnel and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn." ¹

Again in *King Henry the Fifth* :—

"Her fallow leas
The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory
Do root upon." ²

Possibly the "insane root" mentioned by Banquo was hemlock :—

"Were such things here as we do speak about ?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner ?" ³

Mandrake from earliest times has been endued by popular belief with remarkable powers and there is a considerable literature on the subject. How prevalent the beliefs associated with the plant in the Book of Genesis were in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may be judged from the fact that William Coles, in his *Art of Simpling* (1653), states that imitation mandrake puppets were made from briony roots. The demand for these

¹ *King Lear*. Act iv, Scene 4.

² *King Henry the Fifth*. Act v, Scene 2.

³ *Macbeth*. Act i, Scene 3.

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charms must therefore have been considerable. Many of the old beliefs about mandrake are too well known to quote, and there are two references to the old belief that the plant shrieks when dug up :—

Juliet.

“ And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth
That living mortals hearing them run mad.”

Romeo and Juliet. Act iv, Scene 3.

Suffolk.

“ Would curses kill as doth the mandrake’s groan.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 4.

Both Cleopatra and Iago refer to the narcotic properties of mandrake :—

Cleopatra.

“ Give me to drink mandragora

That I may sleep out this great gap of time
My Antony is away.”

Antony and Cleopatra. Act i, Scene 5.

Iago.

“ Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world.
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou own’d’st yesterday.”

Othello. Act iii, Scene 3.

The poppy Iago associates with “ mandragora ” is the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*). In Shakespeare’s day, and long before, the opium poppy was cultivated for its beauty as a garden plant, as it is now. The drug was imported from the East.

“ Juice of cursed hebenon ” has never been satisfactorily explained. Canon Ellacombe inclines to the belief that the usual interpretation henbane (*Hyosycamus niger*) is the

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plant meant. This plant is not so poisonous as it was believed to be in Shakespeare's time. According to Gerard, henbane "causeth an unquiet sleepe like unto the sleepe of drunkenesse, which continueth long and is deadly unto the party":—

Ghost.

"Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ear did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body,
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd like eager droppings into milk
The thin and wholesome blood." ¹

Shakespeare mentions but few pot-herbs, or vegetables as we call them. Indeed the proportion between the herbs and vegetables mentioned in the plays is suggestive of the relative importance of herbs and vegetables in the kitchen garden of his day. It is not easy for us to visualize a kitchen garden of that period. For whereas "herbs" were grown in vast quantities, "vegetables," as we understand the word, were of minor importance. Nowadays, most people eat more vegetables than meat, but as the cookery books show, our ancestors ate meat in large quantities and very little in the way of vegetables. Herbs were required for flavouring, stuffing, and garnishing, for wines, for medicinal purposes, and cosmetics. But if vegetables were few, they were served, so to speak, with a flourish—roots such as beetroot and carrots being carved

¹ *Hamlet*. Act i, Scene 5.

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into fantastic shapes. Hence the references to "roots in characters" in *Cymbeline*.

Guiderius.

"But his neat cookery ! he cuts our roots in characters,
And sauced our broths, as Juno had been sick
And he her dieter." ¹

The only pot herbs Shakespeare mentions are carrots turnips, broad beans, peas, cabbage, leek, onion, and pumpkin. The only reference to the carrot is Mistress Quickly's pun :—

Evans.

"Remember, William, focative is *caret*."

Quickly.

"And that's a good root." ²

The only reference to turnips is also jocular :—

"Alas ! I had rather be set quick i' th' earth,
And bowl'd to death with turnips." ³

Broad beans are mentioned only as a food for horses :—

Carrier.

"Pease and beans are as dank here as a dog ; and that is
the next way to give poor jades the bots." ⁴

And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act ii, Scene 1)—

Puck.

"When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile."

The following are the references to peas :—

Berowne.

"This fellow picks up wit, as pigeons pease."

Love's Labour's Lost. Act v, Scene 2.

¹ *Cymbeline*. Act iv, Scene 2.

² *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act iv, Scene 1.

³ *Ibid.* Act iii, Scene 4.

⁴ *King Henry the Fourth*. Part i, Act ii, Scene 1.

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Iris.

"Ceres, most bounteous lady! thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats and pease."

The Tempest. Act iv, Scene 1.

Bottom.

"I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas."

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act iv, Scene 1.

Touchstone.

"I remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her."

As You Like It. Act ii, Scene 4.

Malvolio.

"Not yet old enough to be a man, nor young enough for
a boy, as a squash is before 'tis a peascod, or a codling
when 'tis almost an apple."

Twelfth Night. Act i, Scene 5.

Fool.

"That's a sheal'd peascod."

King Lear. Act i, Scene 4.

In regard to the last three references a squash is the popular name for a young pod before the peas are formed and a peascod the ripe shell.

Cabbage is mentioned only once:—

Evans.

"Pauca verba, Sir John, good worts."

Falstaff.

"Good worts! good cabbage!"¹

Leeks were despised in Shakespeare's time. Parkinson in his *Paradisus* says, "Our dainty eye now refuseth them wholly, in all sorts except the poorest; they are used with us sometimes in Lent to make pottage, and is a great and general feeding in Wales with the vulgar gentlemen."

¹ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act i, Scene 1.

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This vegetable figures conspicuously in the scene of the quarrel between Fluellen and Pistol.¹ It is also mentioned in the same play on two other occasions :—

Pistol.

“Tell him I’ll knock his leek about his pate
Upon Saint Davy’s day.”²

Again :—

Fluellen.

“If your Majesties is remember’d of it, the Welshman did goot service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps ; which, your majesty know, to this hour is an honourable badge of the service ; and, I do believe, your majesty takes no scorn to wear the leek upon Saint Tavy’s day.”³

There is also Thisbe’s simile :—

“His eyes were green as leeks.”⁴

Bottom’s reference to onions and garlic has already been mentioned. Apart from Enobarbus’ description of himself as “onion-eyed”,⁵ all the other passages in which this vegetable figures refer to its property of inducing tears :—

Lafew.

“Mine eyes smell onions, I shall weep anon.”

All’s Well that Ends Well. Act v, Scene 3.

Enobarbus.

“Indeed the tears live in onions that should water this sorrow.”

Antony and Cleopatra. Act i, Scene 2.

¹ *King Henry the Fifth.* Act v, Scene 1.

² *Ibid.* Act iv, Scene 1.

³ *Ibid.* Act iv, Scene 7.

⁴ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* Act v, Scene 7.

⁵ *Antony and Cleopatra.* Act i, Scene 2.

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Lord.

“And if the boy have not a woman’s gift
To rain a shower of commanded tears,
An onion will do well for such a shift,
Which in a napkin being close conveyed
Shall in despite enforce a watery eye.”

The Taming of the Shrew. Prologue.

The only mention of pumpkins is in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act iii, Scene iii):—

Mrs. Ford.

“Go to, then. We’ll use this unwholesome humidity—
this gross watery pumpion.”

Potatoes figure largely in modern gardens, but in Shakespeare’s day they were rarities, such rarities in fact that in Richard Gardiner’s *Profitable Instructions* (1597), the earliest book on kitchen gardening printed in the English language, they are not even mentioned. Gerard, however, grew them in his London garden, and he was the originator of the incorrect epithet “Virginia potato”. He speaks of the sweet potato as the common potato, which is decidedly confusing to modern readers. Shakespeare twice mentions potatoes:—

Falstaff.

“Let the sky rain potatoes.”

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Act v, Scene 5.

Thersites.

“The devil luxury with his fat rump and potato fingers.”

Troilus and Cressida. Act v, Scene 2.

Almost every known type of gatherer and dealer in simples figures in the plays. A humble gatherer of samphire on Dover cliffs figures in one of the most familiar passages

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in King Lear. Albeit illiterate, he had inherited from his forefathers no inconsiderable store of knowledge of wild plants, and to what dim past ages does he not carry one back in thought?

Edgar.

“Come on, sir; here’s the place; stand still. How fearful
And dizzy ’tis to cast one’s eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half-way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.”¹

In the Queen in *Cymbeline*, we have an amateur of a very different kind, a type known doubtless in every age and clime—the amateur dabbler in physic. Shakespeare credits the Queen with the knowledge of herbs possessed by every Elizabethan housewife. In the days when a doctor could not be summoned at a moment’s notice, it was the housewife’s business to attend not only to the sick of her own household, but also the village folk. In a sense, the Elizabethan housewife was not an amateur, for a knowledge of the medicinal, culinary, and cosmetic uses of herbs, the crafts of distilling and preserving, were included in the education of every girl of position.

Queen.

“I wonder, doctor,
Thou ask’st me such a question. Have I not been
Thy pupil long? Hast thou not learn’d me how
To make perfumes? distil? preserve? yea, so
That our great king himself doth woo me oft
For my confections.”²

¹ *King Lear*. Act iv, Scene 6.

² *Cymbeline*. Act i, Scene 5.

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The highest in the land took a pride in their collections of herbal recipes, exchanged them with each other, and in most still-room books the names of the donors of recipes are affixed. Nor was a knowledge of herbs considered the province of the housewife alone. The most charming Elizabethan still-room book—*Delights for Ladies*—was written by the great dandy and courtier, Sir Hugh Platt. Even kings did not disdain to take an interest in herbal concoctions. Although a good deal has been written about Henry VIII during the last few years I do not think there is a reference in any of the books to the fact that one of the King's hobbies was the concocting of herbal recipes. The MS. containing these is in the Sloane collection, and in addition to those devised by the King are others by Dr. Butts (his favourite physician) and two other physicians. Dr. Butts figures in *King Henry the Eighth*. In nearly all cases the palace where the King devised these recipes is given—St. James, Westminster, Greenwich, etc.—and presumably the roses, violets, honeysuckles, and other flowers used were grown in the gardens of the palaces named.

A perusal of the prescriptions of those days fills one with a profound respect for the constitutions of our ancestors. Many of the medicines administered would kill modern weaklings, even if in robust health. Nauseating ingredients were commonly added, but possibly ignorance of the fact enabled many to survive them. To quote Leontes :—

“ There may be in the cup
A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
Is not infected : but if one present

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Th'abhorr'd ingredient to his eye make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides
With violent hefts : I have drunk and seen the spider." ¹

Remedial baths, now once more a cult, were as fashionable in Elizabethan as in Saxon times, and in the Sonnets there is a charming allusion to the only "bath" that would cure "a sad distemper'd guest" :—

"Cupid laid by his brand, and fell asleep :
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground :
Which borrow'd from this holy fire of Love
A dateless lively heat, still to endure.
And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.
But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new-fir'd,
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast :
I, sick withal, the help of bath desired,
And thither hied, a sad-distemper'd guest.
But found no cure : the bath for my help lies
Where Cupid got new fire—my mistress' eyes."

Apart from medicines the housewife took a pride in having her store-cupboard well filled with cordials for undefined ill-health and emergencies. Shakespeare several times draws his imagery from cordials :—

King Edward.

"A pleasing cordial, princely Buckingham,
Is this thy vow unto my sickly heart."

King Richard the Third. Act ii, Scene i.

Titus Andronicus.

"The cordial of mine age to glad my heart."

Titus Andronicus. Act i, Scene i.

¹ *The Winter's Tale.* Act ii, Scene i.

² Sonnet CLIII.

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Leontes.

“ Ay, and thou
His cupbearer,
. who may'st see
.
How I am galled—might'st bespice a cup,
To give mine enemy a lasting wink !
Which draught to me were cordial.”

The Winter's Tale. Act i, Scene 2.

Leontes.

“ Do, Paulina ;
For this affliction has a taste as sweet
As any cordial comfort.”

Ibid. Act v, Scene 3.

Not all “ cordials ” were innocent, for the art of poisoning was practised by amateurs :—

Cornelius.

“ I left out one thing which the queen confess'd,
Which must approve thee honest : ‘ If Pisanio
Have,’ said she, ‘ given his mistress that confection
Which I gave him for a cordial, she is serv'd
As I would serve a rat.’ ”¹

The humblest dealers in drugs and simples were pedlars and mountebanks. Their wares, consisting chiefly of ribbons, ballads, perfumes, counterfeit jewellery, and other gauds, afforded a vast amount of harmless pleasure to folk, chiefly women folk, in out-of-the-way parts. Autolycus' stock-in-trade included all the usual trumpery :—“ I have sold all my trumpery ; not a counterfeit stone, not a riband, glass, pomander, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, etc., to keep my pack from fasting.”² Mountebanks provided theatrical entertainment, at least of a sort, for those

¹ *Cymbeline.* Act v, Scene 5.

² *The Winter's Tale.* Act iv, Scene 3.

Herbs and Gatherers of Simples

who would otherwise have rarely enjoyed it, and both pedlars and mountebanks were almost the only means of obtaining news of the world in remote districts. As within living memory, the cheap medicines and charms sold by mountebanks found a ready sale, and in Shakespeare's time it must have been a considerable trade. They were also vendors of poisons. Laertes bought from a mountebank the "unction" wherewith he anointed the sword he used in his duel with Hamlet:—

“ I will do 't,
And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword ;
I bought an unction from mountebank,
So mortal, that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood, no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death,
That is but scratcht withal.” ¹

Love potions sold by the mountebanks were commonly associated with charms :—

Brabantio.

“ Ay, to me ;
She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks.” ²

Again, to quote Othello :—

“ I will a round unvarnisht tale deliver
Of my whole course of love ; what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration and what mighty magic.” ³

The use of charms and spells met with no approval from

¹ *Hamlet.* Act iv, Scene 7.

² *Othello.* Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Ibid.*

Herbs and Gatherers of Simples

the Church. Drugs, it was taught, should be administered with prayer :—

Abbess.

“ I will not let him stir,
Till I have used the approved means I have,
With wholesome syrups, drugs, and holy prayers
To make of him a formal man again.”¹

Eight experts in simples figure in the plays. Six doctors—the two doctors in *Macbeth*, the excitable French physician in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the physician in *Cymbeline*, Dr. Butts, the friend and confidant of the King in *King Henry the Eighth*, the kindly doctor in *King Lear*, the apothecary from whom Romeo bought the “ dram of poison ”, and Friar Laurence. But even in those far-off days there were folk who regarded all physic as of no avail. Did not Macbeth exclaim—

“ Throw physic to the dogs,—I'll none of it ! ”²

Although of not the same position as doctors, apothecaries were men of standing. The post of Court Apothecary was an old one and like the Court Physician he wore a green robe as befitted those learned in the virtues of plants. From the fourteenth century until James I granted them a separate charter, the Apothecaries were of the same guild as the Pepperers or Grocers. In London the apothecaries congregated chiefly in Bucklersbury. Hence Falstaff's allusion :—

“ Like a many of these lispng hawthorn-buds that come like women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklersbury in simple-time.”³

¹ *The Comedy of Errors.* Act v, Scene 1.

² *Macbeth.* Act v, Scene 3.

³ *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Act iii, Scene 3.

Herbs and Gatherers of Simples

Bucklersbury took its name from one Buckle, a grocer. According to Stowe, this grocer took down Cornets Tower (a very ancient building) "meaning in place thereof to have set up and builded a goodly frame of timber; but the said Buckle greedily labouring to pull down the old tower, a piece thereof fell upon him, which so bruised him, that his life was thereby shortened; and another that married his widow set up the new prepared frame of timber and finished the work. This whole street called Bucklersbury, on both sides throughout, is possessed by grocers and apothecaries toward the west end thereof."

Muffet in his *Treatise of Meats* states that Bucklersbury being so perfumed with drugs, gums, and spices, escaped the plague, scarcely a house being affected.

The apothecary Shakespeare depicts in *Romeo and Juliet* was a disgrace to his honourable profession. With a mind bent wholly on this earth, he thought of nothing as he went "culling simples" save gain, and for gain he was willing to sell even a man's life:—

"I do remember an apothecary,
And hereabouts he dwells, which late I noted
In tatter'd weeds, with overwhelming brows,
Culling of simples; meagre were his looks,
Sharp misery had worn him to the bones;
And in his needy shop a tortoise hung,
An alligator stuff'd, and other skins
Of ill-shap'd fishes; and about his shelves
A beggarly account of empty boxes,
Green earthen pots, bladders, and musty seeds,
Remnants of packthread, and old cakes of roses,
Were thinly scatter'd to make up a show.
Noting this penury, to myself I said—
An if a man did need a poison now,
Whose sale is present death in Mantua,

Herbs and Gatherers of Simples

Here lives a caitiff wretch would sell it him.
O! this same thought did but fore-run my need
And this same needy man must sell it me.”¹

In striking contrast is the picture of Friar Laurence emerging from his cell to gather herbs. Unlike the apothecary he had looked up, not down. He had found infinity, and beyond infinity, he had found—to use one of Shakespeare’s loveliest phrases—“God’s gentle-sleeping peace”. Having nothing, he possessed all things, even the dawn, “chequering the eastern clouds with streaks of light”—

Friar Laurence’s Cell. Enter Friar Laurence alone with a basket.

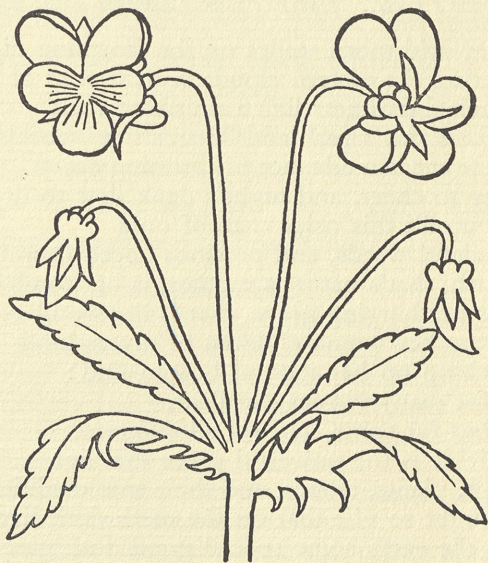
“The grey-ey’d morn smiles on the frowning night,
Chequering the eastern clouds with streaks of light;
And flecked darkness like a drunkard reels
From forth day’s path and Titan’s fiery wheels :
Now, ere the sun advance his burning eye
The day to cheer, and night’s dank dew to dry,
I must up-fill this osier cage of ours
With baleful weeds, and precious-juiced flowers.
The earth, that’s nature’s mother, is her tomb :
What is her burying grave, that is her womb ;
And from her womb children of divers kind
We sucking on her natural bosom find :
Many for many virtues excellent,
None but for some, and yet all different.
O! mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities :
For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,
But to the earth some special good doth give :
Nor aught so good, but, strain’d from that fair use,
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse :
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometime’s by action dignified.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act v, Scene 1.

Herbs and Gatherers of Simples

Within the infant rind of this weak flower
Poison hath residence, and medicine power :
For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part :
Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.
Two such opposed kings encamp them still
In man as well as herbs,—grace, and rude will ;
And where the worser is predominant,
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.”¹

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act ii, Scene 2.



CHAPTER VI

BEE LORE

In Shakespeare's time the number of bee-hives in England probably equalled, if it did not exceed, the population of this kingdom. Bees were the only source of sweet food, almost the only source of light, and from honey was made mead, the only beverage that, even the humblest could afford to make.

The amount of honey consumed and used for sweetening purposes in food, drink, and medicines must have been enormous, for sugar was a luxury only the wealthy could afford, and even they, as a rule, used it solely for medicinal purposes. Mead was made in vast quantities and varied greatly in quality. Poor folk made it by the simple process of steeping the refuse of the combs in water until it fermented. A better liquor was made from honey and it was flavoured in different ways. The finest mead was also made from pure honey and flavoured with both spices and wine. A collection of recipes from the sixteenth and seventeenth century cookery books for the making of mead, metheglin, hydromel, etc., would fill a volume. In the seventeenth century recipes were very elaborate, and in some of them between thirty and forty ingredients are mentioned.

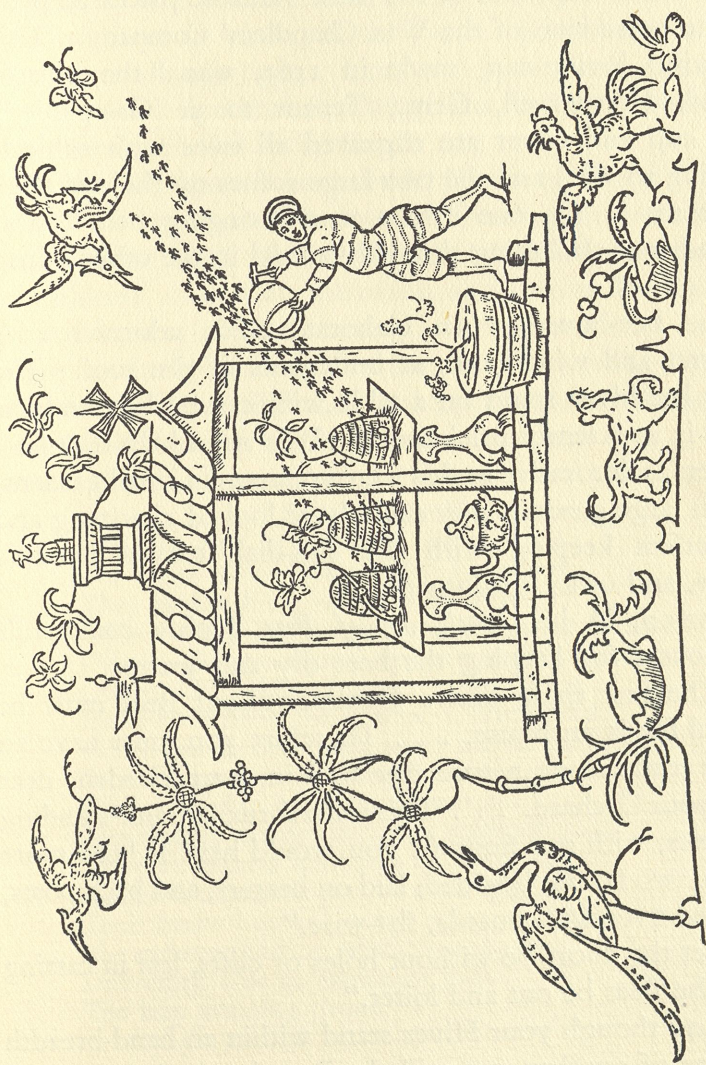
Wax was chiefly required for making wax candles, the use of which had become more general in the fifteenth century. The Guild of Wax Chandlers, however, was established long before, though nothing is known of its existence before 1371, when it was already an important Guild. Wax was also used for many other purposes—the making of wax images for the funeral processions of

princes and great nobles, for sealing and for taking impressions, etc. And from the earliest times witches had made wax images of those on whom they desired to cast their spells.

Amongst the many minor purposes for which honey was used, the strangest is, I think, that mentioned in *Le Menagier de Paris*. In this charming, homely volume, written in the fourteenth century by a bourgeois of Paris for the benefit of his young wife and ranging in matter from religious and moral precepts to cookery and gardening, the author states that when sending cuttings of plants they should be wrapped in waxed cloths, which after being stitched should be smeared with honey and flour. Honey in those days was evidently, like silver in Solomon's reign, of no account.

In Elizabethan times bees, like gardens, were the province of the housewife. "And I will not account her any of my good House-wives" says Lawson in his *Husbandry of Bees* (published with his *Country Housewife's Garden*, 1617) "that wanteth either Bees or skilfulness about them".

Bee houses are unknown nowadays, but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were apparently common. A bee house is depicted in Thomas Hyll's *Proffitable Arte of Gardening* (1568). In two of the corners the bee hives are figured prominently, in one corner sheltered by a house and in the opposite corner with no shelter. The house depicted is of a very simple kind but in large pleasure gardens, the "houses" erected to shelter bee-hives were evidently very decorative. The finest contemporary illustration of such a house is that depicted on the famous



SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BEE-HOUSE.

Reproduced by kind permission of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers from the Normansell Cup.

Normansell cup, one of the most valuable pieces of plate in the possession of the Wax Chandlers' Company. This beautiful loving-cup, made in 1563, was "the gift of Richd. Normansell, Gent., Tenant to ye Companie". The cup and cover are engraved all over with subjects relating to wax, and the two large scenes on the cup itself represent in the one case a man "ringing bees" near a bee-house sheltering three hives, and in the other a man hiving bees.

The bee-house is an elaborate affair adorned with a turret and wind-vanes at both ends of the roof. The three bee-hives stand on a table with carved legs and the floor is apparently brick-work. It is not likely that bee-shelters as decorative as this were common in small gardens, but in large gardens they must have looked charming and in perfect keeping with the sun-dial, carved heraldic beasts, and other adornments.

Lawson, in his *Husbandry of Bees*, highly commends bee-houses for keeping the bees dry and warm.

"The first thing that a Gardiner about Bees must be careful for is an house. . . . Therefore you must have an house made along a sure dry wall in your Garden, near or in your Orchard. . . . This is the form, a Frame standing on posts, with one floor (if you would have it hold more Hives, two floors) boarded, laid on bearers, and back posts, covered over with boards, flat-wise."

"Let the floors be without holes or clifts, lest in casting time the Bees be out and loiter."

"And though your Hives stand within an hand-breadth the one of another, yet will the Bees know their home."

"In this Frame may your Bees stand dry and warm,

Bee Lore

especially if you make doors, like doors or windows, to shroud them in winter, as an house : provided you leave the hives mouth open. I my self have devised such an house and I find that it strengthens my Bees much, and my Hives will last six to one."

"Mr. Markham¹ commends Hives of Wood : I discommend them not : but straw hives are in use with us, and I think with all the World, which I commend for nimbleness, closeness, warmness and driness."

Bee-masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth century were curiously divided as to the sex of the ruling bee, and it is interesting to find that Shakespeare shared the popular belief that the ruler of the hive was a male :—

“ So work the honey-bees,
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach
The art of order to a peopled Kingdom.
They have a King and officers of sorts :
Where some, like magistrates, correct at home ;
Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad,
Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds,
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
To the tent-royal of their Emperor :
Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
The singing masons building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneeding up the honey ;
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at the narrow gate ;
The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum
Delivering o'er to executors pale
The lazy yawning drone.”²

¹ Lawson refers to Gervase Markham, author of *The English Husbandman* (1613), etc.

² *King Henry the Fifth*. Act i, Scene 2.

Thomas Hyll, the author of the earliest bee-book in the English language that has come down to us—*Proffittable instructions of the perfite ordering of Bees* (published with his *Profittable arte of Gardening*, 1572)—writes of the “King bee” thus:—“Their King only do Bees reverence and honor him in such sort that any of them is obedient and very ready at his bidding to do whatsoever he assigneth them unto. Also this obedience and service whiche they use to their King, they do not the same for feare of punishment, but onely of a love which they owe unto him. . . . The Kings are far bigger of body than the honny bees and have a brighter and goodlier head than the other Bees, yet shorter wings. So that their King, created among them, goeth not any time forth of ye hive without ye whole swarme folow him. The King flying forth of the hive at any time, ye other folow him, in such sorte that eche covet to flie next him and joyeth to be seen of ye King in office, and wheresoever ye King setteth him or resteth there be other Bees placed like strong holds or castels about him. About ye King also be placed certayne rulers which wayte upon him by a dayly authoritie. The Bees have a miraculous order among them, if their King happen to die, for then they shal bitterly mourne for their King deade and for the lacke of Another, as such which cannot be ruled and guided without a King among them, and of this they be in continuall mourning. So that for the time, they carry no foode into their Hives, nor flye not forth, but with a sadde bewailing and humming after theyre King. They heape thicke togyther aboute the deade body and unlesse another King increaseth by little and little among them, they dye for honey. Their King

laboureth not, but as the others flye foorth hee in the meane tyme as an exhorter moveth and encourageth forward eveye one to hys worke, by his flying about in the Hive."

Shakespeare's King-Bee surveying "the singing masons", "civil citizens", and "poor mechanic porters", is certainly suggestive of Hyll's statement that the King "as an exhorter moveth and encourageth forward eveye one to hys worke". Elsewhere Hyll states that "such as be sluggish and not labouring they diligently note, which for their sluggishness they bitterly punish to death"; and this recalls Shakespeare's "sad-eyed justice".

Apart from the passage in *King Henry the Fifth* already quoted, Shakespeare frequently uses the imagery of bees. Henry IV, after the Prince had taken the crown from the pillow, compared his own lot to that of the bee:—

"When like the bee, culling from every flower
The virtuous sweets,
Our thighs packt with wax, our mouths with honey,
We bring it to the hive, and, like the bees,
Are murder'd for our pains." ¹

Again, Lord Talbot, when fleeing before Joan of Arc, cries:—

"A witch, by fear not force, like Hannibal
Drives back our troops and conquers as she lists:
So bees with smoke, and doves with noisome stench
Are from their hives and houses driven away." ²

Warwick, after Duke Humphrey's murder, says to the King:—

¹ *King Henry the Fourth*. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 4.

² *King Henry the Sixth*. Part i, Act i, Scene 5.

Bee Lore

"The commons, like an angry hive of bees
That want their leader, scatter up and down,
And care not who they sting in his revenge." ¹

Ulysses says :—

"When that the general is not like the hive,
To whom the foragers shall all repair,
What honey is expected?" ²

In a passage in *Julius Cæsar* the imagery of bees is used with telling force :—

Cassius.

"The postures of your blows are yet unknown
But for your words, they rob the Hybla bees
And leave them honeyless."

Marcus Antonius.

"Not stingless too."

Marcus Brutus.

"O yes, and soundless too ;
For you have stol'n their buzzing, Antony,
And very wisely threat before you sting." ³

Prince John of Lancaster used the imagery of bees with equal force in his speech to the Archbishop of York :—

"You have ta'en up,
Under the counterfeited zeal of God
The subjects of his substitute, my father,
And both against the peace of heaven and him
Have here up-swarm'd them." ⁴

In the same play King Henry's observation—

"'Tis seldom when the bee doth leave her comb
In the dead carrion." ⁵

is suggestive of Samson's riddle. ⁶

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act iii, Scene 2.

² *Troilus and Cressida.* Act i, Scene 3.

³ *Julius Cæsar.* Act v, Scene 1.

⁴ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act iv, Scene 2.

⁵ *Ibid.* Part ii, Act iv, Scene 4.

⁶ *Judges* xiv, 8-18.

Bee Lore

In *Lucrece* Lucretius says—

“The old bees die, the young possess their hive.”

Shakespeare uses the imagery of drones several times. Shylock in bidding Jessica lock all securely in his absence, says in reference to Launcelot Gobbo :—

“Drones hive not with me.”¹

The Duke of Suffolk, in his contemptuous speech before being murdered, says :—

“Drones suck not eagles’ blood, but rob bee-hives.”²

In *Pericles* the simile of drones is used twice :—

Gower.

“Good Helicane, that stay’d at home
Not to eat honey like a drone
From others’ labours, for though he strive
To killen bad, keep good alive.”

Pericles. Act ii, Prologue.

Third Fisherman.

“We would purge the land of these drones that rob the
bee of her honey.”

Ibid. Act ii, Scene 1.

Again in *Lucrece*—

“My honey lost and I a drone-like bee
Have no perfection of my summer left
But robb’d and ransackt by injurious theft
In thy weak hive a wandering wasp hath crept
And suckt the honey which thy chaste bee kept.”

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia, reproaching herself for tearing Proteus’ letter, says :—

“O hateful hands, to tear such loving words !
Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey,
And kill the bees, that yield it, with your stings !”³

¹ *Merchant of Venice.* Act ii, Scene 5.

² *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act iv, Scene 1.

³ *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* Act i, Scene 2.

Bee Lore

Again in *King Henry the Eighth*, the Duke of Suffolk uses the imagery of wasps :—

“No, no :
There be more wasps that buzz about his noze
Will make this sting the sooner.”¹

Tamora says :—

“But when ye have the honey ye desire,
Let not the wasp outlive, us both to sting.”²

Some of the most charming bee passages are those concerning “humble bees”. Titania, when she bade her fairies to wait on Bottom, enjoined them :—

“The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm’s eyes
To have my love to bed and to arise.”³

Nor did Shakespeare forget the love of the “humble-bee” for the thistle :—

“Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipt humble-bee on the top of a thistle ; and good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur, and good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not ; I would be loth to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior.”⁴

The “humble bee” is the subject of Pandarus’ imagery in his speech at the end of the play :—

“O world ! world ! world ! thus is the poor agent despised ! . . . why should our endeavour be so loved, and the performance so loathed ? what verse for it ? what instance for it ?—Let me see :—

¹ *King Henry the Eighth*. Act iii, Scene 2.

² *Titus Andronicus*. Act ii, Scene 3.

³ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Act iii, Scene 1.

⁴ *Ibid.* Act iv, Scene 1.

Bee Lore

Full merrily the humble bee doth sing,
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdued in armed bail
Sweet honey and sweet noted together fail.”¹

The “humble bee” also figures in one of Lafeu’s speeches:—“Your daughter-in-law had been alive at this hour, and your son here at home, more advanced by the King than by that red-tail’d humble bee I speak of.”²

The humble bee was one of the “three” in Armado’s “moral”:—

Armado.

“The fox, the ape and the humble-bee
Were still at odds, being but three.”

Moth.

“Until the goose came out of door,
And stay’d the odds by adding four.”

Now will I begin your moral, and do you follow with my l’envoy.

The fox, the ape and the humble-bee
Were still at odds, being but three,”

Armado.

“Until the goose came out of door,
Staying the odds by adding four.”

Moth.

“A good l’envoy, ending in the goose: would you desire more?”³

There are numerous references to honey, mead, etc., and Shakespeare frequently uses “honey” as a synonym for “sweet”. Honey is a very heavy substance, and

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*. Act v, Scene 10.

² *All’s Well that Ends Well*. Act iv, Scene 5.

³ *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Act iii, Scene 1.

Shakespeare refers to this characteristic in a telling phrase, when Brutus calls :—

“ Boy ! Lucius ! Fast asleep ? It is no matter :
Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber :
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men ;
Therefore thou sleep’st so sound.” ¹

In a lovely passage in *The Tempest*, Ceres addresses Iris as the—

“ Many coloured messenger, that ne’er
Dost disobey the wife of Jupiter ;
Who with thy saffron wings upon the flowers
Diffusest honey-drops.” ²

Honey figures conspicuously in Autolycus’ suggestion—

“ He has a son, who shall be flay’d alive ; then ’nointed over
with honey, set on the head of a wasps’ nest ; then
stand till he be three quarters and a dram dead ; then
recover’d again with aqua-vitæ or some other hot
infusion ; then, raw as he is, and in the hottest day
prognostication proclaims, shall he be set against a
brick wall, the sun looking with a southward eye upon
him, where he is to behold him with flies blown to
death.” ³

Shakespeare twice uses the imagery of an excess of honey involving a loathing of its sweetness. Henry IV, in reproving his son, warned him of Richard II’s example, the foolish young king who

“ Enfeoft himself to popularity ;
That, being daily swallow’d by men’s eyes,
They surfeited with honey, and began
To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little
More than a little is, by much too much.” ⁴

¹ *Julius Cæsar*. Act ii, Scene 1.

² *The Tempest*. Act iv, Scene 1.

³ *The Winter’s Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

⁴ *King Henry the Fourth*. Part 1, Act iii, Scene 2.

Bee Lore

Friar Laurence, in speaking to Romeo before Juliet arrives at his cell, says of "violent delights" :—

"the sweetest honey
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness
And in the taste confounds the appetite." ¹

The following passages in which the imagery of honey is used may also be cited :—

Romeo.

" . . . O my love, my wife !
Death that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty."

Romeo and Juliet. Act v, Scene 3.

King Henry.

"Thus may we gather honey from the weed
And make a moral of the devil himself."

King Henry the Fifth. Act iv, Scene 1.

Ophelia.

"And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suckt the honey of his music vows."

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene 1.

Touchstone.

"No truly, unless thou wert hard-favour'd ; for honesty
coupled to beauty is to have honey a sauce to sugar."

As You Like It. Act iii, Scene 3.

Priam.

" Paris, you speak
Like one besotted on your sweet delights ;
You have the honey still, but these the gall."

Troilus and Cressida. Act ii, Scene 2.

Sir Thomas Grey.

"True : those that were your father's enemies
Have steeped their galls in honey."

King Henry the Fifth. Act ii, Scene 2.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act ii, Scene 5.

Bee Lore

Duke of Norfolk.

“ O fear him not
His spell in that is out. The King hath found
Matter against him, that for ever mars
The honey of his language.”

King Henry the Eighth. Act iii, Scene 2.

“ I know what thorns the growing rose defends
I think the honey guarded with a sting.”

Lucrece.

Amongst the passages in which honey is used as a synonym for sweet, the following may be cited :—

Berowne.

“ White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.”

Princess.

“ Honey and milk and sugar ; there is three.”

Berowne.

“ Nay then, two treys, and if you grow so nice :
Metheglin, wort, and malmsey : well run, dice !
There's half a dozen sweets.”

Love's Labour's Lost. Act v, Scene 2.

Armado.

“ That is all one, my fair sweet honey monarch.”

Ibid. Act v, Scene 2.

Paulina.

“ If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister,
And never to my red-lookt anger be
The trumpet any more.”

The Winter's Tale. Act ii, Scene 2.

Marcus Andronicus.

“ Coming and going with thy honey breath.”

Titus Andronicus. Act ii, Scene 4.

Helen.

“ My lord Pandarus ; honey-sweet lord.”

.

Bee Lore

Pandarus.

"Not I, honey-sweet queen."

Troilus and Cressida. Act iii, Scene 1.

Cressida.

"Sweet honey Greek, tempt me no more to folly."

Ibid. Act v, Scene 2.

Juliet.

"O honey nurse, what news?"

Romeo and Juliet. Act ii, Scene 4.

Pointz.

"Now, my good sweet honey lord, ride with us tomorrow."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act i, Scene 2.

Hostess.

"Prithee, honey-sweet husband, let me bring thee to Staines."

King Henry the Fifth. Act ii, Scene 3.

"A thousand honey secrets shalt thou know."

Venus and Adonis.

"The honey fee of parting tender'd is."

Ibid.

There is only one reference to honeycombs. Prospero said to the recalcitrant Caliban—

"Thou shalt be pinch'd

As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging

Than bees that made 'em."¹

Shakespeare alludes several times to the various uses of wax, notably in one of Jack Cade's speeches, when the rebels were at Blackheath:—

Dick.

"The first thing we do let's kill all the lawyers."

Jack Cade.

"Nay, that I mean to do. Is not this a lamentable thing, that of the skin of an innocent lamb should be made

¹ *The Tempest.* Act i, Scene 2.

Bee Lore

parchment ? that parchment being scribbled o'er should
undo a man ? Some say the bee stings : but I say 'tis
the bee's wax ; for I did but seal once to a thing and
I was never mine own man since." ¹

The soldier at Timon's cave says :—

"What's on this tomb ? I cannot read : the character I'll
take with wax." ²

And later in the same play—

Soldier.

"My noble general Timon is dead
Entomb'd upon the very hem o' the sea
And on his grave-stone this in sculpture, which
With wax, I brought away, whose swift impression
Interprets for my poor ignorance." ³

Imogen, when opening Leonatus' letter, says :—

"Good wax, thy leave : blest be
You bees that make these locks of counsel !" ⁴

In *Love's Labour's Lost* the Princess says to Boyet in
reference to the letter to Jaquenetta :—

"We will read it, I swear.
Break the neck of the wax, and everyone give ear." ⁵

Again in *King Lear*—

Edgar.

"Let us all
Leave gentle wax : and manners blame us not :
To know our enemies' minds we'd rip their hearts,
Their papers is more lawful." ⁶

There is only one reference to wax candles :—

Lord Chief Justice.

"What, you are as a candle, the better part burnt out."

¹ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part ii, Act iv, Scene 2.

² *Timon of Athens.* Act v, Scene 3.

³ *Ibid.* Act v, Scene 4.

⁴ *Cymbeline.* Act iii, Scene 2.

⁵ *Love's Labour's Lost.* Act iv, Scene 1.

⁶ *King Lear.* Act iv, Scene 6.

Sir John Falstaff.

"A wassail candle, my lord, all tallow ; if I did say of wax, my growth would approve the truth."¹

In *Lucrece* there is a reference to wax torches :—

"His falchion on a flint softly smiteth
That from cold stone sparks of fire do fly
Whereat a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth."

In *Julius Cæsar* there is a reference to the use of wax as an adhesive :—

Cassius.

" Set this up with wax
Upon old Brutus' statue."²

Shakespeare several times uses the simile of wax. In a passage in *Lucrece* women are compared to wax :—

"For men love marble, women waxen, minds
And therefore are they form'd as marble will ;
The weak opprest, the impression of strange kinds
Is form'd in them by force, by fraud, or skill
Then call them not the authors of their ill,
No more their wax shall be accounted evil,
Wherein is stamp't the semblance of a devil."

In the *Passionate Pilgrim* the lover describes his mistress as

"Softer than wax and yet as iron rusty."³

Titus Andronicus says :—

"A stone is soft as wax, tribunes more hard than stones."⁴

In *Romeo and Juliet* the Nurse says to Juliet in reference to Romeo :—

"A man, young lady ! lady, such a man
As all the world—why, he's a man of wax."⁵

¹ *King Henry the Fourth.* Part ii, Act i, Scene 2.

² *Julius Cæsar.* Act i, Scene 3.

³ *The Passionate Pilgrim.* Sonnet VII.

⁴ *Titus Andronicus.* Act iii, Scene i.

⁵ *Romeo and Juliet.* Act i, Scene 3.

Theseus says to Hermia :—

“ To you your father should be as a god ;
One that composed your beauties ; yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form of wax
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure, or disfigure it.” ¹

The simile of melting wax Shakespeare uses several times and in the two first instances cited below, he evidently refers to the witches’ custom of placing wax images of those they sought to destroy to melt before a fire :—

Melun, when wounded, says to the English knights—

“ Have I not hideous death within my view
Retaining but a quantity of life,
Which bleeds away, even as a form of wax
Resolveth from his figure ’gainst the fire ? ” ²

Proteus, soliloquizing on his lady, says :—

“ That I did love, for now my love is thaw’d
Which, like a waxen image ’gainst a fire
Bears no impression of the thing it was.” ³

The Earl of Warwick says to Richard Plantagenet :—

“ The proud insulting Queen,
With Clifford and the haught Northumberland,
And of their feather many more proud birds,
Have wrought the easy-melting King like wax.” ⁴

In the same play, in the scene between King Edward and Lady Grey, the Duke of Gloucester says in an aside to the Duke of Clarence :—

“ He plies her hard, and much rain wears the marble.”

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Act i, Scene 1.

² *King John.* Act v, Scene 4.

³ *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* Act ii, Scene 4.

⁴ *King Henry the Sixth.* Part iii, Act ii, Scene 1.

Bee Lore

To which Clarence replies :—

“As red as fire! Nay then her wax must melt.”¹

And in *Venus and Adonis*.

“What wax so frozen but dissolves with temp’ring
And yields at last to every light impression?”

In another passage in the same poem—

“Set thy seal manual on my wax-red lips.”

In *Timon of Athens*, at the ball at Timon’s house, the Poet says to the Painter :—

“My free drift
Halts not particularly, but moves itself
In a wide sea of wax.”²

The most imaginative of all Shakespeare’s bee-passages is surely the line in the Archbishop of Canterbury’s speech about the honey-bee :—

“The singing masons building roofs of gold.”³

But undoubtedly the favourite passage is Ariel’s exquisite song :—

“Where the bee sucks, there lurk I :
In a cowslip’s bell I lie :
There I couch when owls do cry.
On a bat’s back I do fly.
After summer merrily,
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.”⁴

¹ *King Henry the Sixth*. Part iii, Act iii, Scene 2.

² *Timon of Athens*. Act i, Scene 1.

³ *King Henry the Fifth*. Act i, Scene 2.

⁴ *The Tempest*. Act v, Scene 1.

CHAPTER VII

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE MAKING OF A SHAKESPEARE GARDEN

Of the various possibilities for making a Shakespeare garden, the dullest, it seems to me, is simply to grow the flowers, herbs, etc., that he mentions, in one enclosure. Incredibly dull!

The most interesting way is, I think, to make a small garden characteristic of Elizabethan times, a type evidently noted and admired by Shakespeare himself and wholly different from anything we have to-day, though signs are not lacking of its revival. I refer to the Elizabethan winter garden and with such a plot as a framework, so to speak, it would also be possible to grow all the flowers mentioned by Shakespeare.

As I have already emphasized, one of the most interesting uses to which the evergreen herbs of southern Europe were put was the making of winter gardens.¹

The garden (mentioned in Chapter V) laid out at the New York Show was a revelation of what a delightful little winter garden can be made with the varying shades of evergreen herbs. There are numerous possibilities for the making of a permanent garden of this type. The accompanying plan is modelled on a plan for a small garden in Thomas Hyll's *Most briefe and pleasant treatise* (1563), the earliest book on gardening printed in the English language. This garden might be enclosed in various ways—either a hedge of sweet briar—Titania's eglantine²—grown, not in the pitiable way one so frequently sees it,

¹ See page 163.

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

i.e. clipped, but with its lovely arching stems growing naturally quite eight feet high ; beautiful in June when starred with flowers and almost as beautiful in winter when loaded with its vivid red hips. Incidentally, these hips last far longer than most rose hips—usually well into February. Or the garden could be surrounded with wattle fencing against which Ophelia's rosemary "for remembrance"¹ could be trained, the rosemary Perdita described as keeping "seeming and savour all the winter long".²

The general design of the garden—i.e. all the beds—could be planted with thick edgings of lavender, winter savory, rue, thyme, and hyssop. Two of the most characteristic and attractive features of the Tudor winter garden were the dwarf shrub mazes and knot gardens laid out in evergreen herbs. Sometimes these knots were very elaborate, the designs being laid out in the coat of arms of the owner, or his heraldic device instead of a simple geometric pattern. The centre of the garden in the accompanying plan could be made a knot garden with hyssop and rue. Hyssop figures in Iago's "garden sermon"³ and rue amongst both Perdita's and Ophelia's flowers. And rue, "sour herb of grace," was set by Richard II's gardener "in remembrance of a weeping queen".⁴ With these tall-growing evergreen herbs, it would be best to plant the interstices with the crown imperials that Perdita associated with oxlips.⁵ Or if a simpler knot is preferred and made with low-growing herb, it might be laid out in thyme. In spring the interstices of the knot garden could

¹ *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 5.

² *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *Othello*. Act i, Scene 3.

⁴ *King Richard the Second*. Act iii, Scene 4.

⁵ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

be gay with daffodils. Shakespeare's daffodils, i.e. *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*, the only native species; the daffodils of which Autolycus sang, that come in with "the sweet o' the year",¹ Perdita's daffodils

" . . . that come before the swallow dares and take
The winds of March with beauty." ²

Planted sparsely in Elizabethan fashion, the daffodils could be succeeded by Madonna lilies, the lily that Shakespeare described as "mistress of the field"³ and which he mentions so frequently. The handsome green leaves of the lilies would give interest to the knot garden throughout the winter. The four round beds might be devoted to Perdita's "hot lavender".⁴ And the eight oblong beds thickly edged with Winter savory and marjoram. In four of them the centres might be planted with carnations, "the fairest flowers of the season,"⁵ and the other four with Ophelia's columbines, succeeded by the marigolds, to which Shakespeare compared "great princes' favourites"⁶ and of which, in one of his loveliest flower passages he wrote:—

" Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheathed their light,
And canopied in darkness, sweetly lay,
Till they might open to adorn the day." ⁷

The four outer narrow beds beyond might be planted with the flower-de-luce (the flag iris) which adorned Joan of Arc's "keen edged sword".⁸ Like the Madonna lilies

¹ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 2.

² *Ibid.* Act iv, Scene 3.

³ *King Henry the Eighth*. Act iii, Scene 1.

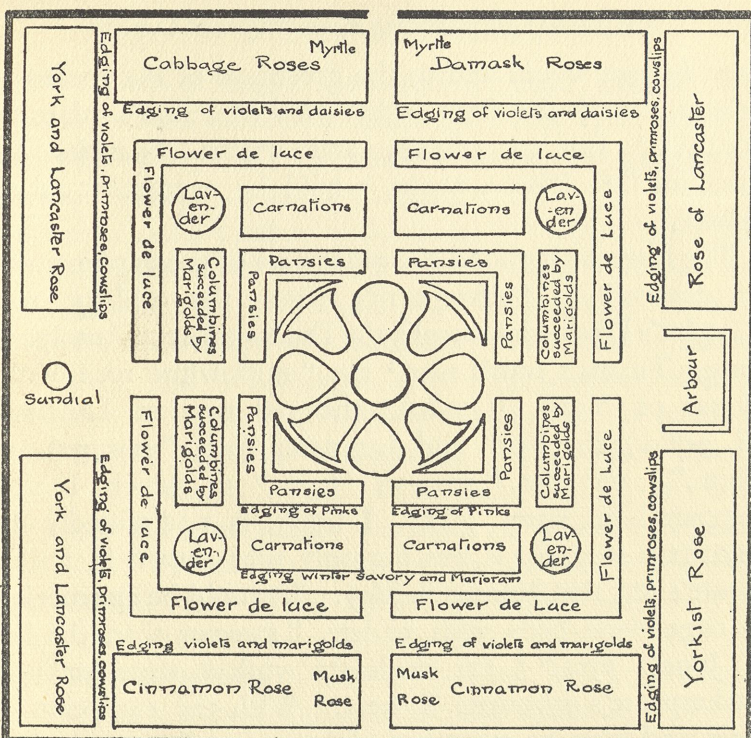
⁴ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

⁵ *Ibid.* Act iv, Scene 3.

⁶ Sonnet XXV.

⁷ *Lucrece*.

⁸ *King Henry the Sixth*. Part I, Act i, Scene 2.



A Shakespeare Garden

In the centre a knot garden. The design laid out with byssop and rue - the interstices planted with Crown Imperials and Madonna lilies.

The round beds with lavender - the others with flowers and herbs marked

In the two outermost corners the witches' herbs.

The inner paths of Camomile

The outer paths of Thyme

The whole garden enclosed with a hedge of Sweetbriar

Suggestions for the making of a Shakespeare Garden

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

their foliage would add to the greenness of the garden in winter. And the four inner with Mercutio's pinks of courtesy¹ for an edging, and within "pansies for thoughts".² These, again, would be evergreen during winter.

The large beds round the outer part of the garden could be devoted to Shakespeare's roses—the cabbage rose (Hamlet's Provincial roses³), the Damask rose of Autolycus' song,⁴ Titania's musk rose,⁵ the "milk-white rose of the House of York (*R. alba*)",⁶ the red rose of Lancaster (*R. gallica*), the York and Lancaster rose, "nor red nor white,"⁷ and the "rose of May",⁸ to which Laertes compared his sister. This, I think, is undoubtedly the cinnamon rose, for it was the only rose grown in Shakespeare's day that blooms in May. It would be appropriate to edge these beds with violets, "sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,"⁹ for evidently violets were amongst Shakespeare's favourite flowers. With the exception of roses and lilies he mentions violets more frequently than any other flowers. Or the beds might be edged with "daisies pied and violets blue"¹⁰ alternately or with Marina's "purple violets and marigolds"¹¹ or Oberon's "oxlips and nodding violets"¹² or "the violets, cowslips, and primroses"¹³ of Cymbeline's queen.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*. Act ii, Scene 3.

² *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 5.

³ *Ibid.* Act iii, Scene 2.

⁴ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

⁵ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 2.

⁶ *King Henry the Sixth*. Part i, Act ii, Scene 4.

⁷ Sonnet XCIX.

⁸ *Hamlet*. Act iv, Scene 5.

⁹ *The Winter's Tale*. Act iv, Scene 3.

¹⁰ *Love's Labour's Lost*. Act iv, Scene 3.

¹¹ *Pericles*. Act iv, Scene 1.

¹² *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

¹³ *Cymbeline*. Act i, Scene 5.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

Two corners might be planted with aconite (the deadliest poison known in Shakespeare's day) and which he mentions twice, and the witches' plants he mentions—hemlock, a root of which "digg'd i' the dark"¹ was an ingredient in the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*; mandrake² and ferns, the seed whereof was reputed to make the users invisible.³ To which fern Shakespeare refers is uncertain—probably the common male fern (*Lastrea felix mas*), the hartstongue fern (*Scolopendrium vulgare*), the common polybody (*Polypodium vulgare*), or the common spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*). The other corners might be planted with wormwood and sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) from the roots of which were made the candied sweetmeats—eryngoes mentioned by Falstaff.⁴ Also fennel, the Holy Thistle (*Carduus benedictus*) of Margaret's prescription for Beatrice⁵ and in front the balm (*Melissa officinalis*) wherewith Anne Page commanded the elves at Windsor Castle to rub the furniture.⁶

The central paths should, I think, be planted with camomile (*Anthemis nobilis*). Falstaff's remark that "the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows", is, I think, literally true. Camomile can be set at any time and the individual plants should be put in about four inches apart. Once it has taken root camomile should be rolled and mown exactly like grass. The outer paths might be thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*).

¹ *Macbeth*. Act iv, Scene i.

² *Antony and Cleopatra*. Act i, Scene 5. For other references to mandrake, see page 181.

³ *King Henry the Fourth*. Part i, Act ii, Scene i.

⁴ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act v, Scene 5.

⁵ *Much Ado about Nothing*. Act iii, Scene 4.

⁶ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act v, Scene 5.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

Then at what I should call "The Fairy Entrance" there could be Shakespeare's fairies' flowers. The path of Titania's thyme¹ and here the edging, instead of the violets, etc., could be "freckled cowslips",² wearing when in flower her "fairy favours".³ The roses on either side at this entrance should be the musk roses⁴ that with eglantine and honeysuckle made the canopy over the fairy queen's resting place,⁵ and at the entrance honeysuckles (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and Puck's broom.⁶

In parts that were mild enough to grow myrtle, bushes of Isabella's "soft myrtle"⁷ (*Myrtus communis*), the myrtle of Euphronius' lovely simile,⁸ would look well at the other entrance.

At the end of the central path, there might be a simple arbour "where honeysuckle ripened by the sun forbids the sun to enter."⁹ And at the other end a sundial. The most delightful reference to a sundial is perhaps the passage in *King Henry the Sixth* (Part iii, Act ii, Scene 5) where the King envies the lot of the homely swain:—

"To sit upon a hill as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly point by point."

And then there was Jaques' "fool in the forest" who "drew a dial from his poke":—

"'Good morrow, fool,' quoth I. 'No sir,' quoth he,
'Call me not fool till Heaven hath sent me fortune.'
And then he drew a dial from his poke,

¹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

² *King Henry the Fifth*. Act v, Scene 2.

³ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Act ii, Scene 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. Act ii, Scene 1.

⁶ Ibid. Act v, Scene 1.

⁷ *Measure for Measure*. Act ii, Scene 2.

⁸ *Antony and Cleopatra*. Act iii, Scene 12.

⁹ *Much Ado about Nothing*. Act iii, Scene 1.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock :
Thus may we see,' quoth he, 'how the world wags :
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after one hour more 't will be eleven :
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot ;
And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools should be so deep contemplative ;
And I did laugh, sans intermission,
An hour by his dial.—O noble fool !
O worthy fool ! Motley's the only wear." ¹

Two passages in the Sonnets were probably inspired by garden sundials—

"Thou by thy dial's shady stealth may know
Time's thievish progress to eternity."

Sonnet LXXVII.

"Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
Steal from his figure and no pace perceived."

Sonnet CIV.

If I made a Shakespeare garden by the sea, the quotation I should choose would be :—

"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end." ²

The following are a few amongst numerous other possibilities for sundial mottoes, and the one I like best I have put last—

"The silent hours steal on."

King Richard the Third. Act v, Scene 3.

¹ *As You Like It.* Act ii, Scene 7.

² Sonnet LX.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

"Now God be praised, that to believing souls
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair."

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 1.

"Make us heirs of all eternity."

Love's Labour's Lost. Act i, Scene 1.

"We cannot hold mortality's strong hand."

King John. Act iv, Scene 2.

"Think of the world."

Julius Caesar. Act i, Scene 2.

"Thus men may grow wiser every day."

As You Like It. Act i, Scene 2.

"Time travels in divers paces with divers persons."

Ibid. Act iii, Scene 2.

"Have comfort: all of us have cause
To wail the dimming of our shining star."

King Richard the Third. Act ii, Scene 2.

"The sun with one eye vieweth all the world."

King Henry the Sixth. Part i, Act i, Scene 4.

"Let us all to meditation."

Ibid. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 3.

"God knows how long I have to live."

Ibid. Part ii, Act v, Scene 3.

"Cares and joys abound as seasons fleet."

Ibid. Part ii, Act ii, Scene 4.

"I seek not to wax great by others waning."

Ibid. Part ii, Act iv, Scene 10.

"May never glorious sun reflex his beams
Upon the country where you make abode."

Ibid. Part i, Act v, Scene 4.

"When the sun sets, who doth not look for night?"

King Richard the Third. Act ii, Scene 3.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

"He that commends me to my own content,
Commends me to the thing I cannot get."

The Comedy of Errors. Act i, Scene 2.

"Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue
But moody and dull melancholy?"

Ibid. Act v, Scene 1.

"So many journeys may the sun and moon,
Make us again count o'er ere love be done."

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene 2.

"Some there be that shadows kiss;
Some have but a shadow's bliss."

The Merchant of Venice. Act ii, Scene 8.

"The time of life is short;
To spend that shortness basely were too long."

King Henry the Fourth. Part i, Act v, Scene 2.

"I that please some, try all."

The Winter's Tale. Act iv, Prologue.

"The same I am, ere ancient'st order was,
Or what is now received: I witness to
The times that brought them in, so shall I do
To the freshest things now reigning, and make stale
The glistening of this present."

Ibid.

"If ever you have spent time worse than now:
If never, yet that Time himself doth say
He wishes earnestly you never may."

Ibid.

"Wisely and slow: they stumble that run fast."

Romeo and Juliet. Act ii, Scene 2.

"O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours! Shine, comforts, from the east."

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act iii, Scene 2.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

"O God! that one might read the book of fate."

King Henry the Fourth. Part ii, Act iii, Scene 1.

"Love like a shadow flies, when substance love pursues :
Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues."

The Merry Wives of Windsor. Act ii, Scene 2.

"Heaven give you many, many, merry days."

Ibid. Act v, Scene 5.

"Men at some time are masters of their fates."

Julius Cæsar. Act i, Scene 2.

"For some must watch, while some must sleep ;
So runs the world away."

Hamlet. Act iii, Scene 2.

"What's to come is still unsure."

Twelfth Night. Act ii, Scene 3.

"You waste the treasure of your time."

Ibid. Act ii, Scene 5.

"Time to be honest."

Timon of Athens. Act i, Scene 1.

"Hoy-day, what a sweep of vanity comes this way !"

Ibid. Act i, Scene 2.

"Like madness is the glory of this life."

Ibid.

"Our content

Is our best having."

King Henry the Eighth. Act ii, Scene 3.

"Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels on beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth
And nothing stand but for his scythe to mow."

Sonnet LX.

Suggestions for Making a Shakespeare Garden

“ Shall Time’s best jewel from Time’s chest lie hid ?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back ?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid ? ”

Sonnet LXV.

“ God’s goodness hath been great to thee ;
Let never day nor night unhallow’d pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.”

King Henry the Sixth. Part ii, Act ii, Scene i.



PLANT LIST

<i>Shakespeare's Name</i>	<i>Botanical Name</i>
1. Aconitum	<i>Aconitum napellus</i>
2. Acorn	<i>See Oak</i>
3. Adonis flower	<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>
4. Almond	<i>Amygdalus communis</i>
5. Apple	<i>Pyrus domesticus</i>
6. Apricot	<i>Prunus armeniaca</i>
7. Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
8. Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
9. Balm	<i>Melissa officinalis</i>
10. Bay	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>
11. Bean	<i>Faba vulgaris</i>
12. Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>
13. Birch	<i>Betula alba</i>
14. Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
15. Box	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
16. Bramble	<i>See Blackberry</i>
17. Briars	<i>See page 39 et seq.</i>
18. Broom	<i>Cystisus scoparius</i>
19. Burnet	<i>Poterium sanguisorba</i>
20. Burr	<i>Arctium lappa</i>
21. Buttons	<i>See page 128</i>
22. Cabbage	<i>Brassica</i>
23. Camomile	<i>Anthemis nobilis</i>
24. Carnation	<i>Dianthus</i>
25. Carraway	<i>Carum carui</i>
26. Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>
27. Cedar	<i>Cedrus libana</i>
28. Cherry	<i>Prunus</i>
29. Chestnut	<i>Castanea vulgaris</i>
30. Clover	<i>Trifolium</i>
31. Clove	<i>Caryophyllus aromaticus</i>
32. Cockle	<i>Lychnis githago</i>
33. Coloquintida	<i>Cucumis colocynthis</i>
34. Columbine	<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>
35. Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>
36. Crab	<i>Pyrus malus</i>
37. Crow-flower	<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>
38. Crown-Imperial	<i>Fritillaria imperialis</i>

Plant List

39. Cuckoo-buds	<i>Ranunculus</i>
40. Cuckoo-flowers	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
41. Currant	<i>Vitis corinthiaca</i>
42. Currant (red)	<i>Ribes rubrum</i>
43. Cypress	<i>Cypressus sempervirens</i>
44. Daffodil	<i>Narcissus</i>
45. Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
46. Damson	<i>Prunus domestica</i>
47. Darnel	<i>Lolium temulentum</i>
48. Date	<i>Phœnix dactylifera</i>
49. Dewberry	<i>Rubus cæsius</i>
50. Dian's Bud	See Wormwood
51. Dock	<i>Rumex</i>
52. Eglantine	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>
53. Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
54. Elm	<i>Ulmus</i>
55. Eringoe	<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>
56. Fennel	<i>Fœniculum vulgare</i>
57. Fern	See page 221
58. Fig	<i>Ficus carica</i>
59. Filbert	See Hazel-nut
60. Flag	See page 13
61. Flower-de-luce	See page 121
62. Fumitory	<i>Fumaria</i>
63. Furze	<i>Ulex europæus</i>
64. Garlic	<i>Allium</i>
65. Gillyvor	See Carnation
66. Ginger	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>
67. Gooseberry	<i>Ribes grossularia</i>
68. Gorse	See Furze
69. Goss	See Furze
70. Grape-vine	<i>Vitis vinefera</i>
71. Grass	See page 23
72. Harebell	<i>Scilla nutans</i>
73. Hawthorn	<i>Cratægus oxyacantha</i>
74. Hazel-nut	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
75. Heath	<i>Calluna erica</i>
76. Hebenon	See page 182
77. Hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>

Plant List

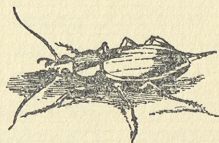
78. Herb-of-Grace	<i>See Rue</i>
79. Hoardocks	<i>See Mustard</i>
80. Holly	<i>Ilex</i>
81. Honeystalks	<i>See Clover</i>
82. Honeysuckle	<i>See Woodbine</i>
83. Hyssop	<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>
84. Insane Root	<i>See page 181</i>
85. Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
86. Knot-grass	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>
87. Lady-smocks	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
88. Larks Heels	<i>Delphinium ajacis</i>
89. Laurel	<i>See Bay</i>
90. Lavender	<i>Lavendula vera</i>
91. Leek	<i>Allium porum</i>
92. Lemon	<i>Citrus limonum</i>
93. Lettuce	<i>Lactuca sativa</i>
94. Lily	<i>Lilium</i>
95. Lime	<i>Tilia vulgaris</i>
96. Locusts	<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>
97. Long-purples	<i>Orchis</i>
98. Mace	<i>See Nutmeg</i>
99. Mallow	<i>Malva</i>
100. Mandragora	<i>Atropa mandragora</i>
101. Mandrake	<i>Bryonia diocia</i>
102. Marigold	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>
103. Marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
104. Medlar	<i>Mespilus germanica</i>
105. Mint	<i>Mentha viridis</i>
106. Mistletoe	<i>Viscum album</i>
107. Moss	<i>See page 22</i>
108. Mulberry	<i>Morus nigra</i>
109. Mushroom	<i>See page 41</i>
110. Mustard	<i>Sinapsis arvensis</i>
111. Myrtle	<i>Myrtus communis</i>
112. Narcissus	<i>See Daffodils</i>
113. Nettle	<i>Urtica</i>
114. Nutmeg	<i>Myristicia officinalis</i>
115. Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
116. Olive	<i>Olea europæa</i>

Plant List

117. Onion	<i>Allium cepa</i>
118. Orange	<i>Citrus aurantium</i>
119. Osier	See Willow
120. Oxlip	<i>Primula</i>
121. Palm Tree	<i>Salix caprea</i>
122. Pansy	<i>Viola</i>
123. Parsley	<i>Carum petroselinum</i>
124. Peach	<i>Amygdalus persica</i>
125. Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>
126. Pea	<i>Pisum sativum</i>
127. Pepper	<i>Piper nigrum</i>
128. Peony	See page 126
129. Pig-nut	<i>Conopodium denudatum</i>
130. Pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>
131. Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
132. Pink	<i>Dianthus</i>
133. Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
134. Plum	<i>Prunus domestica</i>
135. Pomegranate	<i>Punica granatum</i>
136. Poppy	<i>Papaver somniferum</i>
137. Potato	<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>
138. Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
139. Prune	See Plum
140. Pompion	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>
141. Quince	<i>Cydonia malum</i>
142. Radish	<i>Raphanus sativus</i>
143. Raisin	See Grape-vine
144. Reed	<i>Phragmites communis</i>
145. Rhubarb	<i>Rheum palmatum</i>
146. Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>
147. Rose	<i>Rosa</i>
148. Rue	<i>Ruta graveolens</i>
149. Rush	See page 14
150. Saffron	<i>Crocus sativus</i>
151. Samphire	<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>
152. Savory	<i>Satureia</i>
153. Sedge	See page 16
154. Speargrass	See page 22
155. Stover	See page 21

Plant List

156. Strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>
157. Sycamore	<i>Acer-pseudo-platanus</i>
158. Thistle	<i>See page 20</i>
159. Thorn	<i>See page 39</i>
160. Thyme	<i>Thymus serpyllum</i>
161. Toadstool	<i>See page 41</i>
162. Turnip	<i>Brassica rapa</i>
163. Vetches	<i>Vicia sativa</i>
164. Violet	<i>Viola odorata</i>
165. Walnut	<i>Juglans regia</i>
166. Willow	<i>Salix</i>
167. Woodbine	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
168. Wormwood	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i>
169. Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>



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